

Mark Fuhrman's gay connection • Nigel Hawthorne gets real

THE Advocate

THE NATIONAL GAY & LESBIAN NEWSMAGAZINE

SINCE 1967

APRIL 4, 1995

John Travolta

RUMORS

Jodie Foster

Why gossip about an actor's
alleged homosexuality can't
stall a successful career

ISSUE 678



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Circle 100 on Reader Service



"It appears as if the right to private communication will be the next human right to go."

Virtual 1984

I read with great interest the article "Cybersnare" [February 21]. I agree with the concept that an on-line user should proceed at his or her own risk; however, as one of those on the front lines of the on-line revolution, I have to caution that not everything is so clandestine, so suspicious. On local bulletin boards people network, share stories, meet, play games, and entertain themselves, and very little illegal or surreptitious activity takes place.

*Brad Haynes
Van Nuys, Calif.*

The same day I read your article, I happened to start rereading 1984 by George Orwell. The following quote caught my attention: "As for sending a letter through the mail, it was out of the question. By a routine that was not even secret, all letters were opened in transit. Actually, few people ever wrote letters."

I once thought E-mail would usher in a new Age of Letters, but now I'm having my doubts. The issue is the right to private communication, and it appears as if this will be the next of our human rights to go. Remember the days when we were protected from illegal search and seizure?

*Trer On
Richmond, Va.*

Pop and circumstance

Last week my partner was reading *The Advocate* when she began to shriek loudly. It was a melancholy surprise to see a picture of my father, Ernest Mastranzi, who passed away in October 1994, accompanying the article on the South Boston St. Patrick's Day parade controversy ["Courting Trouble," February 21].

The photo makes my dad look like a raging homophobe, and I'd like to set the record straight: Although we had a "don't ask, don't tell" policy per his request, he loved and was supportive of both Flo and me through our 12 years together. Dad and I disagreed on the parade controversy. He believed that parade organizers should have control over whom they allow to march, and I told him that I was disappointed in his thumbs-down sign. He later regretted it. Still, I'm glad you ran the photo. If Dad had still been here, I know he would have been tickled to be in a national magazine and would have sent me out for extra copies.

*Adele Mastranzi
Salem, Mass.*

War hero

Thanks are in order to people like Margarethe Cammermeyer [Viewpoint, February 21] who remind the country that there should be liberty and justice for all. Cammermeyer knows better than anyone else that self-sacrifice is sometimes a necessary element in winning the war. What she has risked—and won—makes her a true hero. I give her four stars.

*Margery Rothenberg
Tallman, N.Y.*

Diseases

In her "Me and My Mammogram" column [Breaking Silence, February 21], Janis Ian seems to have caught more than her "tit in the wringer"; her tongue seems to have been caught as well. Shame on her for comparing AIDS with breast cancer; neither is "sexy." Both pose grave challenges to our community, and both have received inadequate fund-

ing, public awareness, research, treatment options, and prevention efforts. Divisiveness is the weapon of our enemies; we as a community must be united.

*Raymond Babin
Briarwood, N.Y.*

I know you probably couldn't care less, but with this last issue I received, you have lost a subscriber. I am a gay male with absolutely no interest in lesbian issues. Who the fuck cares about Janis Ian's tits?

*Harry Rollins
Desert Hot Springs, Calif.*

[The editors reply: *Well...people who feel basic compassion for the problems of others, maybe? To say nothing of the one in eight women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetimes and all those who love them.*]

Author, author

Imagine my surprise to learn that my editor, Michael Denneny, doesn't publish the work of lesbian authors ["Crown Jewel," February 21]. Either my lesbian credentials are no longer intact, which seems unlikely after more than 20 years, or the information presented in the article is just plain faulty. While Denneny has published considerably fewer lesbians than gay writers, I certainly am not his only lesbian author.

*Nisa Donnelly
San Francisco, Calif.*

If Denneny's only claim to fame in terms of writers who are not white and male is Ntozake Shange, whose *for colored girls...* was published some 20 years ago, then I don't think that we can expect much of him at Crown.

*Rodney McCoy Jr.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

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Hot numbers SEX

- About 3% of Americans say they've given up sex altogether because of AIDS
- One in six Americans has had a sexually transmitted disease
- Among people who had two or more sex partners in the past year, 2% have had both male and female partners
- Only 2.4% of men and 1.4% of women consider themselves truly homosexual

When preliminary findings from the University of Chicago's National Health and Social Life Survey were released in book form in the fall of 1994, attention focused on the finding that about 10% of men could be classified as gay and 9% of women could be classified as lesbian. But other provocative results were not unveiled until February at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Overall, the authors interpreted their findings, including those cited above, as evidence that most Americans are sexually unadventurous.

The kindness of strangers: The House appropriations committee sent a mixed message on federal AIDS funding March 2 when it voted to restore some funds previously slated for cuts—including \$23 million for AIDS prevention programs and \$13 million for the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Re-

sources Emergency Act, which makes grants to cities and states hardest hit by AIDS—but persisted with plans to slash a \$186-million program to provide housing for people with AIDS. About 33,000 people with AIDS now depend on the emergency housing program, according to National Organizations Responding to AIDS, a coalition of AIDS groups.

Pooft! You're sued: An Australian high school student has been hit with a lawsuit under Australia's anti-vilification law for allegedly telling a packed school assembly that “no one else can sniff out a poofter at 50 meters” better than a 17-year-old fellow student, whom he identified by name. Through his attorney, Gideon Boas, the plaintiff said March 1 that about 1,000 students at his high school in Sydney heard the comment, causing him to endure relentless teasing. Said Boas: “It’s the first time to our knowledge that a

7 KABC 20/20

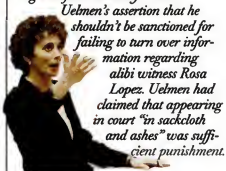


Olympian Greg Louganis discusses homosexuality; people fight the pervasiveness of perfume.

The Los Angeles Times's television listing for ABC's 20/20 program, in which Louganis disclosed that he has AIDS. The squid described two separate topics—we think.

“Frankly, I don't care if he wears a dress.”

Marcia Clark, lead prosecutor in the O.J. Simpson murder trial, responding to defense attorney Gerald



Uelmen's assertion that he shouldn't be sanctioned for failing to turn over information regarding alibi witness Rosa Lopez. Uelmen had claimed that appearing in court “in sackcloth and ashes” was sufficient punishment.

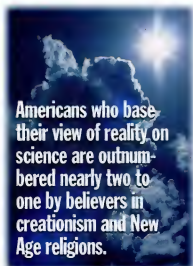
“There would have to be an illegitimate child somewhere and maybe a gay love affair among the jurors. Perhaps the Akita could identify the real killer by barking and pointing.”

General Hospital star Rachel Ames, telling the Los Angeles Times how the O.J. Simpson trial could be made to more closely resemble a soap opera. She also suggested a clandestine affair between lead prosecutor Marcia Clark and judge Lance Ito.

MARCIA CLARK BY SAM MICHROVICH/REUTER
GREG LOUGANIS BY MARK CARDWELL/REUTER

"We, the men of Upham Hall, do not care for faggots. In fact, get out."

A sign purportedly left on the dorm room door of a gay student at the University of Idaho. The student, who asked not to be named, said the sign was part of a pattern of harassment by dorm residents. About a dozen people staged a march February 21 to protest his treatment.



Americans who base their view of reality on science are outnumbered nearly two to one by believers in creationism and New Age religions.

SOURCE: University of Texas survey



"I can see both sides. Don't take a needed

throne in the ladies' room



when you can unzip your dress elsewhere."

Female impersonator Suzanne Burk, philosophizing about a rest room controversy in late February at a Van Nuys, Calif., hotel that was hosting a conference on transvestism and transsexualism. Many conferees were offended at being restricted to public rest rooms that had been reserved for their use after some hotel guests had complained about sharing rest rooms with them.

vilification [complaint] has been lodged in relation to a schoolyard incident."

Ruski business: Visas will be denied to foreigners who intend to spend more than three months in Russia unless they can prove they are HIV-negative. That's the upshot of legislation passed 276-0 by the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, and sent to the Federation Council, its upper house, February 24. A version of the measure that would have required all tourists to be tested for HIV antibodies was vetoed by President Boris Yeltsin.



Yeltsin

Mommy test: All pregnant women should volunteer to be tested for HIV antibodies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in draft guidelines unveiled at a conference on AIDS and women in Washington, D.C., February 22. The federal agency said intervention with the antiviral drug AZT early in pregnancy can dramatically reduce the chance that an HIV-positive mother will transmit HIV to her fetus. Some activists, though, worry that widespread testing of pregnant women will facilitate discrimination against those who test positive.

OK in B.C.: Under new regulations made public February 17, gays and lesbians in the Canadian province of British Columbia will be allowed to adopt children for the first time. Previously only married heterosexual couples were allowed to adopt. Trudy Usher, head of the province's adoption services division, said the change was intended to give single people the same rights that married people have.

No-sex club: "I plead with those of you who are virgins to maintain your virginity until you're properly married." That's what Bakili Muluzi, president of the African nation of Malawi,

told 3,000 youths who gathered at his official residence for the kickoff of an official chastity drive February 25. The chastity drive is intended to stem the spread of AIDS in Malawi, which has one of the highest HIV transmission rates in the world.

China syndrome: For the first time AIDS is the subject of litigation in China. A panel of judges in Xi'an ruled that a man was defamed by a physician who erroneously diagnosed him as HIV-positive and reported the diagnosis to the man's employer, the *Xinmin Evening News* of Shanghai reported February 19. The man was awarded \$3,060, and the physician was ordered to apologize to him and to more than 70 of the man's coworkers who were forced to undergo HIV antibody testing after the diagnosis. The verdict was issued in November but not reported at that time; government officials didn't give an explanation for the delay.

Washout in Washington: AIDS services groups may be among the biggest casualties of Washington, D.C.'s insolvency, *The Washington Post* reported February 20. The district's human services department must cut \$68 million from its \$1-billion annual budget, and AIDS facilities are one of three areas Mayor Marion Barry has targeted for the hardest hits, the newspaper said. But the Whitman-Walker Clinic—the district's biggest AIDS services provider—told the *Post* there's no flab in its budget to cut. In fact, Whitman-Walker director James Graham said, the district government already owes the clinic \$1.4 million.

GARY HERSHORN/REUTERS



Barry

No objection: Homosexuality alone should not be a barrier to child custody, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers said in legal documents made public February 23. The group, which is made up of about 1,500 divorce and matrimonial law

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Under surveillance



Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), who formally entered the race for the Republican presidential nomination February 24, likes to talk about the



Gramm

economy, not civil rights issues. But it was an antigay stance, not balanced-budget talk, that propelled him into the Senate. Running against heavily favored Democrat Lloyd Doggett for a Senate seat in 1984, Gramm floundered until he began relentlessly attacking Doggett for accepting a \$500 campaign contribution from a gay group.

The decision by former Australian opposition leader John Hewson to leave politics could have an impact on the ongoing standoff between the federal government and the state of Tasmania over Tasmania's sodomy law. Although Hewson's economic policies were controversial—Prime Minister Paul Keating derided him as a "feral abacus"—his social policies were moderate, and his public statements helped blunt his Liberal National Party's support for the sodomy law.

Those who remember Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) for his grilling of Anita Hill during the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings may be surprised by his role as a warm and fuzzy fighter for congressional AIDS funding. Hatch led a battle in late February against scaling back



Hatch

the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, which provides federal funding to states and cities hardest hit by AIDS. In his appeal Hatch

stressed the spread of AIDS beyond the populations originally most affected by the epidemic: "This is not a gay disease, an inner-city disease, or a disease of the poor," he said. "AIDS does not play favorites."

attorneys, took the position in an amicus curiae brief filed with the Virginia supreme court in the case of Sharon Bottoms, a lesbian who was denied custody of her son in 1993. Bottoms's case was argued before the Virginia supreme court February 27.

Up with T cells: A new report suggests that it's possible to boost the immune systems of people with HIV by using off-and-on infusions of interleukin 2 (IL-2), a natural protein that regulates the body's immune response. "This is the first time I truly... feel excited" about a treatment, said Dr. H. Clifford Lane, a researcher at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who reported his findings in the March 2 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Unlike AZT and other drugs that attack HIV directly, the new therapy works by stimulating the production of T cells. Treatment with IL-2, however, appears to benefit only people whose T cells are not already severely depleted, and it carries a serious drawback: side effects that mimic a severe case of the flu.

Eyes on the prize: When Lt. Tracy Thorne received the Navy Achievement Medal on February 28, his reaction was confusion. "I'm still befuddled by it all," said Thorne, who has been waiting since July 1994 to find out whether the Navy will discharge him for being gay. Thorne, 28, who came out on ABC's *Nightline* in May 1992, was later charged with violating the Clinton administration's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. In the summer of 1994, a naval board of inquiry recommended discharge, but Navy secretary John Dalton has yet to rule on the recommendation. Thorne received the medal in recognition of his "professional achievement in the superior performance of his duties" between January and October 1994. Thorne has said that if Dalton upholds the discharge, he will go to federal court to challenge the Administration's policy. "I love the Navy and want to continue to be part of it," he said.



Thorne

Around the nation

Arkansas: A bill that would have repealed Arkansas's sodomy law was rejected by the state senate judiciary committee February 24. It was the third time in six years that the panel has rejected such a measure.

California: A bill that would allow gay, lesbian, and unmarried heterosexual couples to register their domestic partnerships was introduced in the state assembly February 21. The measure is identical to one that was vetoed in 1994 by Gov. Pete Wilson.

Colorado: Arapahoe County district attorney Bob Gallagher said February 20 that he may file criminal libel charges against right-wing television talk-show host Bob Enyart for condemning gays and lesbians on a January 9 broadcast and telling viewers, "Don't be a homo."

Maryland: After a long custody battle, David North—an HIV-positive gay Upper Marlboro man—was awarded overnight visits with his three daughters February 15. North's ex-wife had argued that the visits would endanger the girls.

Around the world

Argentina: Former dictator Juan Carlos Onganía was placed under 20-day house arrest February 20 for saying in an interview with the magazine *Noticias* that President Carlos Menem's administration is corrupt and could be toppled by a popular revolt. In the same interview Onganía, 80, blasted gays and lesbians, condemned public displays of affection, and said violence against television is justified.

China: At least two sex-aids shops in Beijing have closed for lack of customer interest, the newspaper *Beijing Youth Daily* reported March 1.

Spain: A museum dedicated to poet Federico García Lorca opened in Granada in February. Lorca—widely believed to be the lover of painter Salvador Dalí—was killed by fascist troops during the Spanish civil war.

Swaziland: The majority of babies admitted to hospitals in Swaziland are treated for AIDS-related illnesses, government health minister Derek von Wissell said March 1. Still, few citizens realize the seriousness of the disease, he said.

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DIED: Christopher Fons, 27, activist, of complications from AIDS February 21 in Milwaukee. Fons founded Milwaukee's ACT UP chapter.

DIED: W. Wayne Karr, 40, AIDS activist, of complications from AIDS February 21 in Los Angeles.

DIED: Dan McCoy, 37, actor, of complications from AIDS February 7 in New York City. McCoy made his Broadway debut as Munkustrap in *Cats* in 1992.

DIED: Steven T. Mendelson, 36, illustrator and author of children's books, of complications from AIDS February 11 in Highland Park, Ill. He wrote and illustrated *Stupid Emelian* and a version of *The Emperor's New Clothes*; he also illustrated several books by humorist Art Buchwald.

DIED: Russell Smith, 38, arts writer and critic, of complications from AIDS February 16 in Dallas. Smith wrote for *The Dallas Morning News*.

DIED: Irwin N. Stroll, 43, interior designer, of complications from AIDS February 16 in Malibu, Calif. As a 17-year-old volunteer in Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign, Stroll was shot in the leg during Kennedy's assassination. Stroll recovered from the injury and established a clientele that included Dustin Hoffman, Ray Stark, Regis Philbin, and Jackie Collins.

DISCOVERED: The body of Mark Finch, 33, director of the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, off the coast of San Mateo County, Calif. Finch, who suffered from depression, apparently jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge on January 14. His body was found by a boater February 5 but was not identified until February 23.

APPOINTED: Dan Sprehe, as a lobbyist for the Illinois Federation for Human Rights, a gay political group. Sprehe was an aide to Lt. Gov. Bob Kustra.

APPOINTED: Dee Mosbacher, physician, to the board of directors of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), a political group. Mosbacher, a gay rights activist, is the daughter of Robert Mosbacher, who was secretary of commerce during the Bush administration. Also appointed to the NGLTF's board were activists **Graciela Sanchez** and **Don Davis** and attorney **Nancy Koch**.



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To serve and protect?

With a rogue cop on the witness stand, the O.J. Simpson trial revives charges of homophobia against Los Angeles police

By John Gallagher

Ongoing homophobia in the Los Angeles police department is the other side of the allegations of racism made by O.J. Simpson's defense attorneys, activists have said. "The department has had a history of refusing to discipline officers because of antigay conduct," said Bert Voorhees, an attorney representing two officers, one lesbian and one gay, who have charged the LAPD with harassment. "It should be obvious that it's not just antigay conduct they don't discipline but virtually any discriminatory conduct."

The prospect of Det. Mark Fuhrman's testimony at the Simpson trial along with suggestions that he has a history of racist behavior on the force has once again focused media attention on the department. The LAPD's tactics were the subject of intense scrutiny four years ago from a commission chaired by now-secretary of state Warren Christopher. But critics of the department say little has changed despite the commission's long list of recommendations.

"There is movement, but it has been glacial," said Roger Coggan, director of legal services at the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center. "What has been accomplished is dwarfed by what remains to be done."

Other observers agreed. "There are still serious problems in terms of how the LAPD deals with lesbian and gay civilians and officers—ongoing harassment of lesbian and gay crime victims and witnesses and continued physical assaults on suspects," said Jon Davidson, senior staff counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.



LAPD's Fuhrman (above) and Williams: Their department is back under the microscope.

However, Art Mattox, a gay member of the city's police commission, said numerous recommendations have been adopted, including expanding sensitivity training and advertising for potential applicants.

Mitchell Grobeson, a gay officer who settled a lawsuit against the department for harassment two years ago, countered that such efforts were largely window dressing. "There's been a great deal of surface change, rhetoric, and tokenism," he charged. Grobeson maintained that there are only five openly gay male officers on the force and that two others were forced out in the past year because of antigay harassment.

Voorhees, who was among the attorneys representing Grobeson, contended that in its settlement with the officer, "the department promised to do a great number of things, many of which have not been done."



Voorhees also represents Natasha Benavides and Lance LaPay, who both filed suit against the department in August 1994. They claim they were the target of verbal harassment—and physical attack in LaPay's case—from fellow LAPD officers because they are openly gay.

Activists had been hopeful that the ouster of former police chief Daryl Gates, whom they long considered to be their antagonist, would solve some of the problems in the department. But Grobeson said many officers remain loyal to Gates. "All of the people who were brought in and promoted under the Gates regime are now in positions of power," he said. "Every officeholder has a picture in his office of himself with his arm around Gates."

Voorhees said Gates's successor, Willie Williams, has done little in addressing allegations of antigay conduct by officers. "If you want to get the attention of people in law enforcement, you have to tell them that misconduct is going to cost them their jobs," he said. "Willie Williams hasn't shown that he's willing to do that."

Nor does Williams seem prepared to accept certain cosmetic changes. For example, he forbade officers to wear their uniforms at the March 2 dedication of a memorial to LAPD officers who have died from AIDS complications.

Grobeson said that while such actions underscore the department's refusal to acknowledge AIDS and gay issues in its midst, local gays and lesbians bear some responsibility for having failed to apply political pressure to the department. "The primary issue is, Is it important to the gays and lesbians of Los Angeles?" he said. "As far as I can tell, it is not." ●



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SEE YOU IN COURT

State by state antigay initiatives could get a boost or a blow when the Supreme Court considers Colorado's Amendment 2

By Chris Bull

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to review Colorado's antigay ballot measure left activists fearful that the Court's conservatives were preparing to deliver a knockout blow to gay legal rights rivaling that of *Bowers v. Hardwick*, its 1986 ruling upholding the constitutionality of sodomy laws.

"I certainly had hoped that the Supreme Court would not take the Colorado case," said Jean Dubofsky, the lead counsel for the gay and lesbian plaintiffs challenging the measure, known as Amendment 2. "We have not been particularly successful getting the Court to side with us in the past. We're definitely facing an uphill battle."

But David J. Garrow, author of *Liberty and Sexuality: The Right to Privacy and the Making of Roe v. Wade*, said the Court's decision to review the case is not necessarily a bad omen for gay rights advocates. "I'm not pessimistic about the Court's willingness to vote on the gay side, at

least on this case," he said. "It's just as likely that the Court's more liberal members are hoping to make a positive statement about gay rights."

While agreeing February 21 to hear the Colorado case, *Romer v. Evans*, the Supreme Court rejected more than 500 other appeals—demonstrating the significance the justices attach to it. The appeal is scheduled to be argued in the fall, and a decision is unlikely to be released until 1996.

Approved by Colorado voters in 1992, Amendment 2 would have overturned ordinances banning antigay discrimination in several major cities; it would also have prohibited gays and lesbians from lobbying for gay rights measures in the future. But in a 6-1 decision in October 1994, the Colorado supreme court ruled that the amendment violated the equal-protection clause of the U.S. Constitution by restricting the ability of gays and lesbians to participate in the political process.

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether states can indeed, in

the words of the lower court's ruling, "fence out an independently identifiable class of persons" from lobbying state and local lawmakers to protect it from discrimination. In its appeal the state will argue that the lower court's ruling impinges on the rights of voters: "State referenda outlawing prostitution would 'fence out' prostitutes from the local political process," the state said in its brief to the Supreme Court.

Matthew Coles, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, said if the high court rejects the equal-protection argument in the case, gay rights advocates will have virtually exhausted the constitutional arguments that can be made on behalf of their cause. "*Hardwick* made it extremely difficult to make a privacy argument on behalf of gays and lesbians in the courts," he said. "If we lose this case, it will make certain kinds of equal-protection arguments more difficult. There will be other avenues to pursue, but it reduces the number of arrows in our quiver."

A Supreme Court decision reviving Amendment 2 would also breathe new life into the moribund antigay-initiative movement. "A lot of religious-right groups have not wanted to spend resources on measures that are being struck down by the courts," said Mary Jean Collins, national field director for People for the American Way, a Washington, D.C.-based civil rights group. "But if the Supreme Court overturns the state ruling, we will see a proliferation of antigay initiatives across the country."

Even if the Supreme Court places the final nail in Amendment 2's coffin, the antigay-initiative movement will simply take new forms, Collins said: "We are already seeing conservatives organizing against gay adoption, foster parenting, and marriage." The political battle is likely to rage on, agreed Gene Nichol, dean of the law school at the University of Colorado at Boulder: "A lot of people would like to see the Supreme Court put an end to this whole mess. But I'm afraid we've got to be prepared to return to the barricades." ●

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Marriage bans

The battle over same-sex unions heats up as two states consider legislation to outlaw them

By Jorge Morales

A fierce court battle in Hawaii over the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry won't be decided until the fall at the earliest, but that hasn't stopped conservative lawmakers in other states from reacting to the mere possibility of same-sex marriage becoming legal. Two states have already considered preemptive legislation to deny recognition of gay marriages—no matter where those marriages are performed—and gay activists fear that other states may follow suit.

In South Dakota a bill that would have declared same-sex marriages "null and void" in the state sailed through the house but was killed by the senate March 1 after a month of often-contentious debate. "Ultimately, we just put enough messages through that this was bad news for South Dakota," said Barry Wick, executive director of the South Dakota Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Federation.

In Utah, however, a bill preventing the state from recognizing gay marriages performed elsewhere was introduced February 7, then rammed through both houses of the state legislature in less than an hour on March 1. The new law was seen as closing a loophole in the state's existing law banning same-sex marriages; it has been on the books since 1990.

Activists predict that bills like the ones introduced in Utah and South Dakota soon will pop up all over the country. "This can happen anywhere. The question is when," said Evan Wolfson, senior staff attorney for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a national gay organization that is fighting for same-sex marriage. "All you need is some right-wing legislator to pick up the paper and read about Utah and say, 'Hey, we can do this too.'"

The Hawaii case was filed against the state by three couples in 1991; in 1993 the state's supreme court returned it to a lower court, saying that the state could not deny mar-

riage licenses to same-sex couples unless it could show a compelling interest in doing so. Although the trial won't start until September 25, legislators in South Dakota and Utah feared that hordes of gay couples could legally tie the knot in Hawaii, then descend on their states seeking equal treatment. South Dakota state representative Roger Hunt said he introduced the ban in his state to keep gays and lesbians from demanding insurance benefits for their spouses—a demand, he said, that would create economic hardship for the state's employers. But economic arguments also played a role in the bill's defeat after legislators debated the impact of a possible boycott on the state.

If opponents of gay marriage should raise the issue again in South Dakota, gay activists say they will be better prepared. "In South Dakota we had nothing one month ago," said Robert Bray, field organizer for the Fight the Right Project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Now we have a gay and lesbian movement where there wasn't one before."

The Utah bill was introduced at the instigation of Lynn Wardle, a law professor at Brigham Young University. The Mormon Church, which operates the university, remained officially neutral on the measure but has traditionally opposed gay marriage. The predominantly Mormon Utah legislature voted overwhelmingly in favor of the measure.

The American Civil Liberties Union has already pledged to challenge the Utah bill once the Hawaii court rules. "This will be the test case," said David Nelson, president of Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats. "But that's a year away."

In the meantime, national organizations are bracing for attacks on gay marriage elsewhere in the country. "This is the wake-up call for the gay and lesbian movement," said Wolfson. "The question is whether we will be prepared." Added Bray: "This isn't just about marriage. This is possibly the final frontier of gay activism." ●

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Endangered species

Gay-themed programming on PBS and NPR could be headed for extinction

By Eric Jansen

Programs with gay and lesbian content could be among the first casualties of Congress's war over public broadcasting. And while opponents of public television and radio say they're costly anachronisms, others say the real issue is getting pro-gay and other liberal programming off the air.

On March 2 the House Appropriations Committee approved cuts in federal support for public broadcasting of 15% for 1996 and 30% for 1997. House speaker Newt Gingrich has said he ultimately wants to eliminate funding for public broadcasting, arguing that the expanding array of commercial broadcasting and cable services provides sufficient diversity in programming.

As evidence in favor of that argument, Gingrich's sup-

porters point to the February airing of NBC's *Serving in Silence: The Margarette Cammermeyer Story*, to gay and lesbian TV-sitcom characters, and to several gay-themed cable shows. And they contend that 1994's successful broadcast of *Tales of the City*—the TV dramatization of Armistead Maupin's celebrated '70s serial—should have reaped profits for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

"It's not like Hollywood's not receptive," says Tim Graham, associate editor of "Media Watch," a newsletter for the conservative Media Research Center in Alexandria, Va. "On too many occasions we feel that commercial broadcasting and entertainment is very pro-gay."

Public television and radio, by contrast, have been criticized for not being pro-gay enough. "We

have seen a sad lack of true commitment on the part of PBS to fulfill its mission to serve all communities," says Laurie Falik, cochair of the San Francisco Bay area chapter of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a media watchdog group. Falik calls PBS's sudden decision last year not to back a *Tales of the City* sequel "unexplainable and unforgivable." And *The Subject Is Sex*, a weeklong National Public Radio (NPR) series that aired in January, gives homosexuality scant mention.

Yet even their gay and lesbian critics credit PBS and NPR with coverage of gay and lesbian issues that is generally superior to what airs on commercial television and radio. Says Falik: "Certainly we have nothing to gain by the extinction of public broadcasting."

GLAAD's executive director, Ellen Carton, agrees. "Defunding PBS will be dreadful in terms of gay and lesbian programming," she says, adding that public TV "explores everything in a more thoughtful way." Carton notes that whereas gay and lesbian characters on commercial TV are mostly confined to sitcoms, public television has offered documentaries such as 1992's *Portrait of a Marriage*, which explored the lesbian relationship of two English writers. "You get to explore the characters in depth," says Carton, "as opposed to seeing someone come on and off a couple of times in 22 minutes."

The beauty of public television, says *Serving in Silence* coproducer Craig Zadan, is that "star" support isn't required to get controversial projects on the air. "Without Barbra Streisand [co-executive producer] and Glenn Close [co-executive producer and star] attached to it, NBC wouldn't have made this movie."

Carton applauds Home Box Office (HBO) for producing numerous gay-positive programs, including documentaries such as Randy Shilts's *And the Band Played On*. HBO, however, is a premium cable service for which subscribers must pay over and above the cost of basic cable—which itself is still not available everywhere.

What's most at risk if public



The antics of gay and bisexual characters in PBS's *Tales of the City* drew fire from opponents of public broadcasting.

broadcasting is cut, say industry insiders, is money for cutting-edge programs produced by independents such as the late filmmaker Marlon Riggs. Much of Riggs's work, including his groundbreaking and highly controversial *Tongues Untied*, about gay black men, aired nationally on PBS's *P.O.V.* documentary series.

"We're certainly concerned," says Nancy Robinson, publicity manager for the Independent Television Service (ITVS), funder of several *P.O.V.* segments and of *A Question of Equality*, a four-part public television series on gay rights now in the final stages of production. If ITVS is axed, says Robinson, it would mean "less opportunity for different points of view and voices in public television." She estimates that about a tenth of ITVS productions addresses gay issues.

ITVS, set up under congressional mandate to produce programming for underserved audiences, is federally funded. The money is funneled through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the quasi-governmental agency Gingrich and Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) want to "zero out," possibly through privatization.

CPB's 1996 fiscal-year federal appropriation is \$312 million—about 0.02% of the \$1.5-trillion federal budget. CPB in turn distributes this money to ITVS, several ethnic minority producers' consortia, other national programmers, and about 1,000 NPR and PBS stations.

Individual stations rely on CPB to varying degrees. While a few big-city stations would barely miss CPB funds, some small, rural stations depend on CPB for nearly half of their operating budgets. Some say that without the ongoing operating funds, these stations would have to cease broadcasting altogether.

"Stations are going to have to make up the differences in their budgets, and they're not going to be willing to take risks," says *Soundprint* radio documentary series producer Moira Rankin. She says stations will tend to buy programs most likely to build membership: "Projects like *Tongues Untied* and *Tales of the City* won't get made."

Some observers, noting that CPB's budget is a mere drop in the federal

bucket, say the Republican's budgetary argument is a smoke screen. "What they're up to is, there's programming they don't like—gay programming," says Jill Bond, director of People for the American Way's Artsave project. "Every direct-mail piece that comes out of a religious-right organization calls public broadcasting the Homosexual Network."

Indeed, in 1992 the Media Research Center called PBS the Gay Pride Channel for its Gay Pride Week programming. And in 1994 shortly after *Tales of the City* aired, American Family Association (AFA) executive director Rev. Donald Wildmon called the series "the latest in an ongoing campaign by PBS to promote the homosexual lifestyle and agenda." He urged AFA members to write and call Congress demanding an end to federal support of PBS.

"From the gay-activist perspective, most of us would probably appear to be homophobes," concedes Graham.

"But that's not our main issue." He says his group is primarily concerned with PBS's alleged political bias. But he says homosexuality is among the controversial issues on which PBS is supposed to provide balanced coverage. *Tales of the City*, for example, could have been "balanced" with "a miniseries that shows a family devastated by AIDS," Graham says. "We have to give homosexuality, abortion, masturbation some sense of stigma. That's the only way we have to keep this society from traumatic moral decline."

A Question of Equality producer Arthur Dong says it seems "pretty obvious" that PBS, in light of congressional debate over its very survival, will look more cautiously at airing the series. With segments on gay

youth and gays in the military, the series is "a hot one," says Dong. "We anticipate a fight."

PBS media representative Karen Doyne denies that congressional scrutiny has affected programming decisions, noting that PBS will air Dong's *Coming Out Under Fire*, a documentary about gays and lesbians in the military.

She agrees, however, that content is behind the attack on PBS. "The surest way to get rid of controversial programming on PBS is to starve the system of money," says Doyne. "That is no secret to those who are trying to defund us."

But programming changes for PBS may be

in the works even if the service remains fully funded. On March 10 Jennifer Lawson, PBS's highly respected top programming executive for the past five years, resigned. Lawson, who came under fire from the Right for *Tongues Untied* and *Tales of the City*, left after PBS president Ervin Duggan announced a restructuring that diminished her authority.

PBS's decision last year not to back *More Tales of the City* shortly followed Duggan's installation as president. Maupin calls Duggan, a former Bush appointee to the Federal Communications Commission who has ties to the religious right, "a glorified Sunday-school teacher."

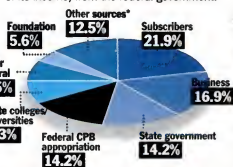
Maupin says PBS's "refusal to participate in the sequel is far more telling about their real attitudes" than its support of the original, noting that *More Tales* is more political and more critical of the Right.

PBS still maintains that its decision was purely financial. But Maupin doesn't buy it. "If PBS survives," warns the author, "I think it's going to end up being a potent voice for the religious right." ●



Where the money comes from

In 1993 the CPB, which provides some PBS and NPR stations with half their operating funds, received \$254 million (14.2% of its income) from the federal government.



1993 CPB income: \$1.79 billion

*Including local government (3.2%); private colleges and universities (1.3%); auctions (1.2%); other public colleges and universities (0.9%); and all other sources (5.9%). SOURCE: CPB

Total number of PBS TV stations:

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Total number of NPR radio stations:

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BELOW THE SURFACE

Greg Louganis dives into the memories behind his explosive autobiography and tells all

In the previous issue of *The Advocate*, writer Chris Bull looked at what effect if any Greg Louganis's openness about his homosexuality and AIDS diagnosis would have on breaking down closets in the sports world. Now, in the following interview with Louganis, **PETER GALVIN** gets personal with the Olympic champion, grilling him on his moral choices, his current sex life, and his concerns over whether he will ever really have a permanent romantic relationship.

The story of Greg Louganis is *not* just the story of someone who has AIDS. It's the tale of a gay man who transcended the overwhelming cruelty and ignorance of his world to reach heights that no person has ever attained by becoming the only diver to win double gold medals at consecutive Olympics. Louganis also won a silver medal at the 1976 summer Olympics when he was only 16.

Along the way, Louganis has had to contend with a series of daunting obstacles that would have thwarted a lesser person: the knowledge that he was adopted and perhaps unwanted by his real parents; an adoptive father who initially ignored him and watched from the sidelines as his son was beaten for being a "sissy"; the condition of dyslexia, which left him with the lasting impression that he was a "dummy" and a "retard"; a lover who abused him, raped him, and, acting as his manager, misappropriated his funds; and finally, an HIV-positive diagnosis that came at the apogee of his career.

But now, at 35, Louganis has worked through many of the feelings of low self-esteem that left him vulnerable to the manipulation and control of others. And in 1994 he took what he calls a "baby step" toward



living life as a "free man" when he came out of the closet at the Gay Games. But coming out was a mere prelude to the giant step he took in February, when, on the eve of the publication of his autobiography, *Breaking the Surface*, he told Barbara Walters on ABC's *20/20* that he has AIDS. It was as if he were finally telling the world that *no one* was going to be running Greg Louganis's life except Greg Louganis.

"When I first met Greg, he was very reserved, quiet, and profoundly sad," says Eric Marcus, who coauthored *Breaking the Surface* with Louganis. "Working with him, I felt that he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. He talks about how this past year has been a journey for him. I experienced some of that journey with him, and it's exhilarating to see him now. It's a

cliché, but he has absolutely blossomed. His smile lights up his face these days, and it is a smile of true freedom."

And so it was a free and candid Louganis who sat down with *The Advocate* in his Manhattan hotel room for his first post-Barbara Walters interview. Although he professes not to be at his best in a verbal setting, Louganis was engaging, articulate, and quite sincere.

What has the media blitz been like for you?

The way the story broke, it probably seemed really chaotic. I couldn't talk to anyone until after the thing with Barbara Walters aired. But the debates about what happened when I hit my head [on the diving board at the 1988 Seoul Olympics] and whether or not there was blood in the pool—which there wasn't—was going on without me. I'm not an expert as far as AIDS and HIV. The doctors who came forward were able to answer the questions that I was afraid of. There's been a lot of education going on about how HIV is transmitted, so that was actually a really positive result of all of this.

From reading your book, I found out that Dr. James Puffer, who stitched up your head without wearing gloves, stitched you up a second

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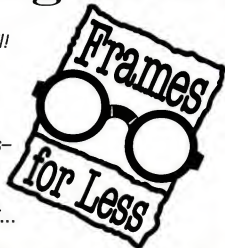
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time: after you finished your last dive of the preliminaries. You were in a private room in the Olympic village, but you still didn't tell him that you were HIV-positive. Why?

That whole time between hitting my head on the board and getting up to do my next dive took all my energy to keep it together emotionally, to get up there and do another dive and stay competitive. That's exhausting. By the time I got to the village, I was in a fog.

You say you were in a fog, yet you did notice he was not wearing gloves a second time.

I didn't. That was my coach, Ron O'Brien, who noticed. I was totally vacant. I really wasn't there. And, you know, I shook his hand and made sure I looked at his hands very carefully. I do say in the book that it was irresponsible. Have you ever competed in the Olympics? Do you know what that's like? It's like being under a microscope.

Another article I read said that your disclosure would not have a great public impact because you're gay. It would only provide yet another opportunity for the general public to deny that AIDS could happen to them.

[Mockingly] "We're not going to listen to him because he's a fag."

Right. Why don't you talk a little about the good things that you hope will come of all of this.

The good things have already been happening. Yesterday this guy about my age came up to me and said, "You're my hero. I got into diving because of you, and I'm also dealing with a lot of the issues that you're dealing with now." Now, I don't know if he meant he was dealing with HIV. Also the manager of my mother's apartment complex said that her daughter committed suicide after an HIV-positive diagnosis. She said that she wishes her daughter had been around to see what I had to say.

You told Barbara Walters that "according to the CDC," you have AIDS. What did you mean by that? The CDC has stated that if your T-cell count is below 200, you have full-blown AIDS. But no one ever

told me that. I had to read it in my own book—in one of the drafts.

Are you saying that Eric Marcus put that fact in your book and didn't tell you? Otherwise, you would have considered yourself HIV-positive?

Yeah, and I was stunned. It was very upsetting. I worked with my therapist, and he explained why. I understood it on an intellectual level, but emotionally it was really hard. I'm asymptomatic, and, according to the National Institutes of Health, I'm HIV-positive. Now, according to the CDC, I have full-blown AIDS. When Barbara asked me if I have AIDS, it was so surreal. I said to her later, "I don't know if I'm comfortable with this." And we talked about it, and I thought, *Well, maybe I am.* And I allowed it to stay. And it took a lot of explaining to my mom—and that was really difficult.

How's your health now?

Fine.

In your book you talk about having had a fungal infection in your colon.

Yeah. That was the scariest thing that happened to me because I did go to the hospital.

Are you using only Western medicines for your treatment?

So far, I think I'm going to be inundated with various alternative treatments and suggestions now. I have a feeling that it's going to be confusing.

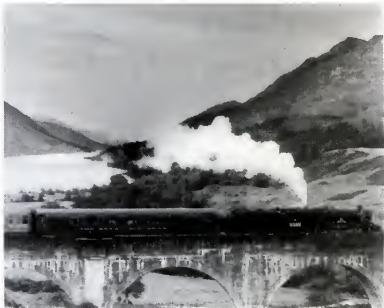
Let's talk about your ex-lover Jim Babbitt—whom in your book you refer to as Tom—who died of AIDS in 1990. You were with him for six years, and during most of that time, he was your manager as well as your lover. Now, he did some really hideous things to you before you left him. And you hired a private investigator who found out that he'd been arrested several times.

Yeah, there was petty theft, grand theft, and solicitation. Most of them were before we were together. Obviously, he had been looking for a meal ticket, and I was it.

Can you concretely say that there weren't any solicitation arrests while you were together?

I don't know. I remember the rap

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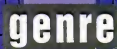
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sheet that the investigator brought us, but I don't remember the years. It was a very hard pill to swallow.

When people read about that in your book, they're going to say, "How could he have been so naive?"

During that period my self-esteem wasn't there. I wanted to believe that things were the way they were, even though two plus two wasn't equaling four. At that point I didn't think anyone else would have me. I felt that that's what I deserved. I know different now.

Do you look back on it in disbelief?

No, because then I start beating myself up about it. I did what I did and thank God I'm not in that place anymore. I'm looking ahead. In a sense I think you choose these things.

A psychotherapist would say that you knew what you were getting into with Jim right from day one.

Yeah. I mean, shit, within the first year, he rapes me at knifepoint. I should have run then. I mean, that's a clue for most people.

You called him up the day after the rape and begged to be forgiven, as if you deserved what he did to you.

This was at the beginning of the relationship, and I didn't think to conceal that I had been seeing other men. But when he raped me he called me a slut and a lying whore, and I felt I deserved that.

In your book you say that it was only in 1986 that you started thinking about AIDS in a serious way. I think people might say to you, "Why didn't you know more about AIDS?"

During that time I was very focused on the diving and my goals in that regard. I did view myself as a dummy and a retard, so I didn't think I would understand a lot of the stuff that was written about AIDS. So when it came to reading *Newsweek* or newspapers, I avoided it. [Jim] read a lot, so he was kind of my eyes and ears. Conversations came up that were rather disturbing, but I was under the misconception that it didn't affect me because I was in a committed relationship. With [Jim], after the rape, it was very clear to me that it was a very committed relationship.

After the rape, which resulted in Jim's laying down the ground rules of monogamy—which he ignored—did you ever have sex with anyone else during the relationship? No. I was afraid of getting raped.

Several times in your book, you say that all you really wanted from a romantic relationship was someone to take care of you. Do you think your need to be taken care of was ultimately very destructive for you? Yeah, I do. You have to come into a relationship being two wholes. You know, two wholes, not "holes." [Laughs] And I don't feel that I was a whole person. I have this fantasy of being Mr. Homemaker, cooking the meals, cleaning the house, taking care of the dogs. But I know that it would only last for so long, so I'm better off getting comfortable with myself, getting stronger emotionally.

Are you dating at all?
Dating's really weird.

Why? Because you're a celebrity?
If somebody's a fan, I usually back off because we do have to be somewhat on equal footing. I want someone who's real. I've got a number of people in my life who I see as big brothers, because I don't know where I'm at with the emotional or the physical part of a relationship.

Let's talk about sex. I think a lot of gay men use sex for—
Validation.

Yeah, and there's a big difference between hot sex and making love.
That's a conversation I had with my shrink. He said, "Have you ever made love?" And I said, "I don't know." I really don't. I probably came the closest with Kevin [an ex-lover who died of AIDS complications in 1990]. But now I hope for something different.

Have you ever been promiscuous?
From my perspective I thought I was a major slut. But in talking with Eric, I realized that I haven't been promiscuous like a lot of gay men.

Prowling around bookstores and back rooms has not been part of your sexual life?
No. I've never even been to a bath-

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house. I mean, I've heard about them, but I've never been in one. Bookstores? Are you kidding? I'd be too embarrassed. I mean, I've *been* in a bookstore—you don't want to go with me to a bookstore because I get all giggly. It's very foreign to me, and I blush very easily.

Do you mean when you go into the back part of the bookstore, where people are having sex?

Oh, they have a back part?

Have you ever called anyone for phone sex?

No, and I'd get embarrassed about it. There have been times when I'll call a friend and we'll get kind of hot and heavy and it's late. I don't know. It feels so awkward, and I'll be like, "Why are you doing this?"

What? They start having phone sex with you?

Yeah. And I've tried it, but I'm not very good at it because I never know what to say. [Laughs]

In your book you say that you could never think of yourself as attractive, let alone a sex object.

Are you happy with your body now?

Nope. Is anyone?

Then it must have been difficult for you to walk around in those skimpy bathing suits all the time.

Well, in a sense it was part of the uniform. I'm working on this, but I still see this chubby little kid with a wide ethnic nose and no pecs. Whenever I see somebody with pecs, I go, "I hate him. He has pecs."

Have you tried to build up your pecs?

Yeah, I've done more of a weightlifting workout since I've retired from diving. The one thing my coach was concerned about was my bulking up too much. But now I'm able to do more of a weight program, as far as building.

Hasn't it ever struck you that millions of gay men look up to you as a physical ideal?

That's really bizarre, because going to the gym, I'd always get real self-conscious because there are these guys there with incredible bodies. I never felt like I matched up.

So how do you meet guys these days?

Usually I meet people through friends or friends. I think it will be easier now; I think I avoided a lot of people because of the secret of my HIV. There's a number of people I've dated, and they know my HIV status. Dating to me doesn't mean sex. There were a couple of people I was seeing when I was in L.A.—and I see them more as friends—and I'd say, "Would you stay over and hold me?" The holding is better than any sex. That's what I want. It's safe, and it's comforting to have a warm body that can hold you. That to me is better than sex.

And there are always your dogs, three Great Danes and a Welsh corgi.

Yeah, but dogs don't hug back. ●

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A farmer talks horse sense



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Religious extremists such as Lou Sheldon who promote criminalization of HIV-positive people, all-out war on gay youth, and federal strong-arming of school districts think of their AIDS agenda as similarly effective. As a farmer, though, I've taken a hard look at the "herd health" approach to the AIDS epidemic, and I've decided I would never hire Sheldon to run a farm. Men like him view gay people as animals but refuse to see how universal laws of disease spread HIV—in our penal system, for example.

The federal government and the religious extremists have pushed a "get tough on crime" policy that crowds 1.5 million men and boys into institutions where forcible sex is rampant. Perhaps some prison authorities still kid themselves that locking the obvious "queers" in a separate cellblock will "contain the spread of AIDS." But any informed person knows that straight convicts are equally the victims and perpetrators of rape behind bars. According to Stop Prisoner Rape, a national organization, 290,000 prisoners are sexually assaulted every year. Female prisoners have a similar problem with forced-sex demands by male staff and guards.

With that much rape going on, a prisoner's risk is high. Indeed, our federal and state correctional systems are fully aware that they have a full-blown AIDS epidemic behind their walls. Prison staff get into the sex too. A prison-activist friend of mine who did hard time in Folsom and San Quentin told me of a guard he knew who was screwing two different boyfriends "inside"—then going home to his wife.

It's likely that released prisoners are—and have been for a long time—a big continuing factor in America's increasing number of AIDS cases. How will our right-wing political puppets—and the church puppeteers who pull their strings—be accountable to the public when they go on pretending that AIDS should be punished by the very penal system that helps spread it? Where are the accurate figures on AIDS deaths in prison? How many convicts have seroconverted behind bars? How many communities that scream about rapists being released into their backyards are even thinking about the spread

of HIV out of those very same prisons? Into the black community, where 25% of the young men now spend time behind bars? Into the Latino community, which has a similar tragedy with its youth? Into the white community, which is the most pathetically asleep to the threat?

In the animal world there are sexually transmitted diseases too: brucellosis, for instance, a bacterial infection that causes spontaneous abortion in cows. When I was a kid on a Montana ranch, the word *brucellosis* struck terror into our hearts, because the disease was incurable and there was no vaccine, only a test. One infected cow or bull, one lab mistake on a test, could ruin an entire herd. All you could do was call in the bulldozers.

Imagine the agribusiness honchos standing up at Department of Agriculture meetings and intoning pompously, "Why, we can't possibly spend money on a cure for brucellosis. It would seem that we are approving the lifestyle of livestock operators who run their businesses carelessly and thus expose their cattle to infection. It wouldn't be moral of us to condone the slobs in this business."

No, Agribusiness does have its bad guys, but they don't stick their heads in the sand too long when it comes to the universal laws of disease. The old-time eradication methods—shooting infected herds, quarantines—are too costly. Unlike Sheldon and his ilk, farmers and ranchers took a hard, honest look at the costs. People like my dad, who headed the Montana Livestock Commission in the '40s, knew they needed a cure or a preventive. So the white coats went to work and developed a vaccine. Brucellosis is still a threat today—but at least protection exists.

So where is our government's all-out effort to develop an AIDS vaccine? Why is Washington, D.C., relying on medieval methods of enforcing public health? And why are the lives of Americans worth less than the lives of cattle, chickens, and pigs?

Unfortunately, if our government relies on medieval methods to stop AIDS, any farmer or rancher in the country can see what's next. When the gunfire dies away at the pits, when the last school is muzzled and the last gay kid is terrorized back into heterosexual conformity, those preachers and their politicians will realize with some astonishment that they still have a huge AIDS epidemic on their hands.

Warren is the author of 'The Front Runner and its sequel, Harlan's Race. She has also been a wildlife worker and an organic poultry farmer and has bred show cattle and show horses—even fancy cats.

**I've looked at the
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New ways to fight HIV and AIDS

By Gary R. Cohan, MD

Rarely has there been a louder and more heated debate in medical circles than over whether and when to start drug treatment for asymptomatic people with HIV infection. In fact, for years my colleagues and I seem to have been trapped in a perpetual medical version of the CNN debate show *Crossfire*.

To the left are those who aver that no medical therapies for HIV infection have been proved effective. They claim that all the available drugs are too toxic and that the virus is actually pretty quiet—almost in hiding—until the patient's T-cell count falls below a given threshold number—500 or 200

or whatever. They have insisted that antiviral therapy should be delayed until one witnesses a big drop in T-cell count or some major HIV-related medical problem.

To the right are doctors who have contended that a person who is HIV-infected should be on some sort of antiviral therapy to slow viral replication from day one. These folks believe that we've been misleading patients in our published strategies (which don't "officially" recommend starting antivirals until T-cell counts fall below 500) by letting the virus reproduce unchecked for long periods of time.

By the time we do decide to start treatment, it's almost too late.

Each camp has drawn lines in the sand and argued that its approach was the right one. Until now it was not at all clear which strategy would prevail. Fortunately, the answer has arrived, and it is both exciting and humbling news.

In the past six months, researchers have learned the following:

- HIV is never dormant, and the immune system never sleeps. From the

moment that a person is infected with HIV, an enormous amount of virus is produced every hour and is promptly destroyed by a hyperactive immune system, which responds with 2 billion new CD4 cells daily. Over sev-

eral years the predaceous virus wears down the immune system's ability to control this or any other infection, causing immune-system failure. Therefore, it may not make any sense to wait until T-cell counts drop below 500 to initiate antiviral therapies. In fact, antivirals should probably be considered from the day a person tests HIV-positive.

- Nonprogressors—long-term survivors of HIV infection with intact immune systems—have one major thing in common: lower levels of detectable HIV in the bloodstream than people who progress to AIDS. Hence, the logical goal of our antiviral treat-

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PHOTOGRAPH - BETH MARCUS

ments should be to diminish the viral load to levels that closely mimic those of long-term nonprogressors.

- Viral-load blood tests that accurately determine the amount of virus in the body are now widely available. Most researchers believe that these new tests will eventually replace simple measures of T-cell counts as the standard by which the effectiveness of new anti-HIV therapies is assessed.

- Drug combinations such as AZT and 3TC have antiviral effects proved to be at least ten times those of traditional single-drug treatments. They are also longer-lasting and can feasibly be made available before the end of 1995 to people with HIV infection. Use of combined antiviral drugs in conjunction with the new protease inhibitors may deal an even more devastating blow to the virus and may for the first time make possible decades of healthy life with HIV.

Taken as a whole, this new knowledge has revolutionized our approach to the treatment of nearly everybody with HIV infection. The battle cry among leading physicians has now become "Hit 'em hard and hit 'em early." Still, after many years of sometimes contradictory and often disappointing news, some doctors and patients remain skeptical. They might do well to be reminded of a story from the 1992 presidential campaign: Candidate Clinton taped a note to his bathroom mirror that read "It's the economy, stupid!" as a constant reminder that the number one issue with American voters was the long-faltering U.S. economy. Doctors treating people with HIV infection might consider taping a similar note to their exam-room walls—"It's the virus, Doc!"—as a constant reminder that the ultimate goal in early HIV treatment is to get the viral load down—way down—to a level where the immune system (and the patient) has a fighting chance of remaining alive for the long haul.

Syphilis returns

In 1942 Lt. Gen. Douglas MacArthur said to the people of the Philippines, "I shall return," and in 1944 he did. If only syphilis could have been as eloquent and

prophetic, we might have been prepared for its resurgence as one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases around the world. After reaching a peak of 467,755 cases in 1944, U.S. syphilis cases declined to a low of 64,621 in 1977. In the next 15 years, however, syphilis made an insidious return; there were 101,259 U.S. cases in 1993. Even more disturbing, epidemiological studies have proved that genital ulcerative diseases such as syphilis put people at a markedly increased risk for HIV infection and AIDS.

Not only can primary syphilis cause the classic painless ulcer in the mouth or on the penis, rectum, or vagina three weeks after initial exposure, but left untreated it can go on to secondary syphilis (often characterized by enlarged lymph nodes and a rash) and years later to a serious brain infection called neurosyphilis. In people with HIV infection, syphilis may progress to these advanced stages more rapidly.

Syphilis may be diagnosed by various blood tests. In complex cases examination of the spinal fluid or skin biopsies may be necessary. People with HIV infection may have falsely negative blood tests for syphilis, so a high index of suspicion and an aggressive approach to diagnosis are crucially important. Depending on the stage of infection, syphilis can be treated with simple antibiotics. In people with HIV infection, intravenous therapy with higher doses of antibiotics for two to three weeks may be necessary. Like HIV, syphilis may remain clinically silent with no obvious symptoms for many years after the primary infection. Hence, it has become ever more important for doctors and sexually active patients to be aware of this problem and to get a blood test for syphilis annually.

Cohan is a board-certified internist and HIV specialist. He practices with Los Angeles's Pacific Oaks Medical Group, the largest private medical group in the United States dedicated to HIV treatment and research. Research and editorial assistance for this column were provided by Laurie Shaker-Irwin, Ph.D. Send your questions c/o The Advocate, P.O. Box 4371, Los Angeles, CA 90078-4371, or send a fax to (213) 467-6805.

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The gay Oscars

The film historian who tries to document a lesbian, gay, and bisexual presence at the first Academy Awards presentations in 1929 would have to hedge a bit—we were there, and in a way we weren't. The winner of the Best Actress prize that night, Janet Gaynor, was rumored to have been a lesbian, and *Sunrise*, one of three films that together won her the award (and which also won a statuette for Unique and Artistic Picture), was directed by a gay man, F.W. Murnau. The winner for Best Picture, *Wings*, featured a subtly homoerotic relationship between its two leads, and one of the other nominees in that category, *The Racket*, was produced by Howard Hughes, a bisexual.

Sixty-six years later things seem both very different and very similar. What's different? Gay content runs a bit more thickly through the nominated films: *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *Interview With the Vampire*, *Red*, and *Strawberry and Chocolate*, to name only a few. What's the same? Just as in Gaynor's day, rumors about a star's homosexuality still circulate—witness this year's acting nominees John Travolta and Jodie Foster—without doing a whit of damage to the performer's career.

Is it possible now to be out and a success in films? Definitely, given the unprecedented number of gay Oscar nominees this year: Nigel Hawthorne (the first openly gay man to be nominated as Best Actor); costume designer Tim Chappel; documentarians Deborah Hoffmann, Dee Moshbacher, and Frances Reid; and songwriter Elton John. No film historian would have a need to hedge about the 67th Academy Awards presentations: The simple fact is that we were there.

"What Hollywood is selling is heterosexual fantasy, ba

Cover Story

The final frontier

Performers in music, theater, and television have watched their careers take off after they ended rumors about their sexuality by coming out. But who will test the movie industry?

By John Gallagher and Alan Frutkin



It's a custom as old as the movies themselves. In a dark theater an image flickers on a giant screen:

A handsome man and a beautiful young woman kiss. The hearts of the audience flutter. Everyone knows the image is only acting, but it's not *just* acting. The

actors embody the audience's hopes and dreams of romance. And as vehicles for the way Hollywood perceives those dreams, the actors are—officially, at least—always straight.

"Movies are illusions that we all buy into," says film critic Leonard Maltin. "If that illusion is betrayed, I think people resent it. It's as simple as that." Or at least that's the assumption. Maltin points out that

there is no way of knowing how true the assumption is. "American moviegoers haven't adjusted to the idea of an openly gay romantic lead because they haven't been given the opportunity, have they?" he says. "How can they ever reconcile this idea in their minds if they're never going to have that experience?"

Compounding the problem is the peculiar relationship of the actors and their fans—a bond that is both emotional and financial. "Ninety-nine percent of the movies that are out are designed as heterosexual love stories, and there's this unrealistic terror that an openly gay actor would not be able to pull that off," says Michael Musto, a columnist for *The Village Voice*.

And despite the increasing visibility of lesbians and gay men in other professions—even within other branches of the entertainment industry—not one box-office giant has ever come out. For the actors who portray sex symbols and action heroes, Hollywood may be the last frontier in terms of being gay. No one knows if a superstar can come out and still have a career afterward.

"The situation in movies is different than in almost any other industry or any other walk of life," says Owen Gleiberman, a critic at *Entertainment Weekly*. "What Hollywood is selling is heterosexual fantasy based on the simple fact that most people are straight."

ed on the simple fact that most people are straight."



The simple truth is, the rumors that have swirled around some of Hollywood's biggest screen attractions seem

to have had little effect on their careers. The tabloids' speculation about Tom Cruise has not dampened his spectacular success. Similarly, Richard Gere continues to see his name above the title, even though he and his wife, Cindy Crawford, last year went so far as to run a newspaper ad denying that they were gay. Gere and Crawford have since separated.

The ultimate proof of the harmlessness of rumors can be found in this year's Academy Awards nominations. Both Jodie Foster and John Travolta have been the target of conjecture about their sexual orientations for years. In the May 8,

FOSTER:

"Accused" of being a lesbian, she stays silent as a lamb on the subject.

1990, issue of the *National Enquirer*, health spa manager Paul Barresi claimed

to have been Travolta's gay lover for two years. In the March 21, 1992, issue of the *Star*, Foster was singled out among 60 stars *Queer Nation* planned to out during that year's Oscar ceremony. The *Star* subhead read MILITANTS SMEAR BEST ACTRESS NOMINEE JODIE FOSTER. Today, only a few years later, both Foster and Travolta stand a good chance of winning Oscars for their performances in, respectively, *Nell* and *Pulp Fiction*.

Generally speaking, says Leeza Gibbons, star of her own talk show and a reporter on *Entertainment Tonight*, talent can triumph over rumor. "There are probably half

TRAVOLTA:

This urban cowboy stays alive as a romantic lead despite rumors he's gay.

a dozen names in Hollywood that rumors have circulated around for years," she says, "and among those names are some of the most bankable stars that we know. There's evidence that rumor alone doesn't hurt."

Film critic Rex Reed says, "The people I keep hearing about are people who lead very discreet lives. Therefore, they just keep doing great parts. It's almost diabolical really—the way their careers are manipulated by the power structure to walk the straight and narrow path."

One industry executive, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, says closeted actors can find their range limited in unexpected ways. "If you're straight, you can play gay," he says. "If you're gay, you can play

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berman says, "If a star were to say privately, 'Gee, maybe I should come out,' everybody—the studio heads, the agent—would all be screaming for this guy not to, because their livelihood depends on it."

Reed agrees: "Just because two major executives, David Geffen and Sandy Gallin, came out of the closet doesn't mean that all these actors are going to follow them. The majority of people who are still hiring—who are still in the top echelons of the production level—are straight. Even if they're not homophobic, they're still trying to sell a product. This is an industry that is not philanthropic, and these people have to guard their careers like they were blue-chip stocks."

If the actor went ahead anyway, he might find himself treated differently by the media as well. "The problem

CERE:

Questions about whether he's looking for Mr. Goodbar have not stalled his career.



fantasy about girls on girls."

Given all the pressures, it's understandable why actors are reluctant to discuss their sexual orientations. "Movie stars don't have a very long shelf life as it is," says Waters. "They have to worry about their beauty, their age, the parts and directors they pick. This is one more thing to add to the list."

Krost says that if any of his clients wanted to come out, he would advise them to do so. "If you're already a big star, you already have enough money," he says. "Why stay in the closet and be unhappy just to make another \$20 million when you already have \$20 million? Enjoy your life." But many observers say such advice would be rare.

The irony, some journalists say, is that the atmosphere may not be as charged as Hollywood believes it is. "I just don't think that there would be as much of a backlash as

come out, the fallout can be fairly minimal.

with coming out is that it then becomes your byline," says Gibbons. "Movie Star X, who is openly gay—that would be the very next line. I think it's sad for people to deny who they are, but for publicity—and this is a publicity machine—you'd be permanently tethered that way."

That kind of identification would shrink the actor in the eyes of many ticket buyers, observers believe. Gleiberman says, "Fundamentally, people want to believe that movie stars, who are such larger-than-life romantic figures, are in some ways the people they appear to be on-screen."

Krost adds that the less an audience knows about an actor's personal life, the better it may be for his or her career. "Casting is used as a color in a palette," he says. "Does this actor bring a certain quality? When you don't know about a person's sex life, then a director can give him any role. It doesn't tilt the palette."

Musto argues that the knowledge that a lead actor is gay or lesbian is beside the point for most of the audience. "It assumes that everyone is

kind of a moron and doesn't understand that movies are basically escapist constructs in which people are pretending," he says.

Director John Waters agrees: "When I go to movies, I'm not thinking about what that person does in bed. They're not giving a good performance if I do. I'm there to see them in the movie, not date them."

But others contend that for much of the audience sitting in the dark, it is a kind of date, and finding out your date is gay when you aren't would dash cold water on your hopes for a steamy evening. "I don't think women are going to sit around and swoon over Brad Pitt if he said he was gay," says Janet Charlton, a columnist for the *Star*. "I know I wouldn't drool over him if he were kissing men; it wouldn't be the same."

By contrast, *National Enquirer* columnist Mike Walker says, an openly lesbian romantic lead might spark the fancy of male moviegoers. "Her box office would triple among males, because there's a different impulse there," he says. "Men love lesbians. All straight men have this

the paranoia would indicate," says Gibbons.

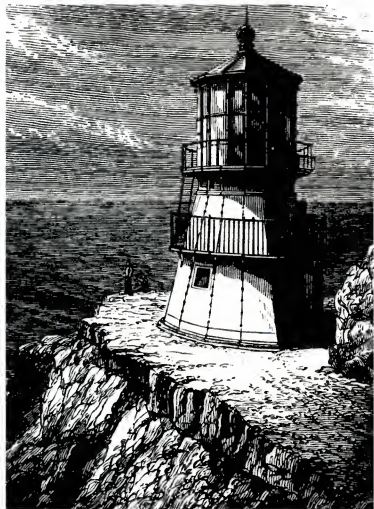
"I think people underestimate the public," agrees Maltin. "It happens in Hollywood all the time. Look at the movies they make."

Hollywood does have a long history of overreacting when an actor's sexual life becomes public, only to dissolve in a deluge of apologetic tears later. In the early '50s Ingrid Bergman was effectively banned from making films in the United States when she left her husband and daughter for director Roberto Rossellini. But fans missed Bergman's screen magic, and Hollywood officially absolved her by giving her an Oscar for *Anastasia* in 1957.

The anecdote only serves to underscore how impossible it is to make predictions: Until some actor tests the waters, no one will know how the audience will respond. When it comes to real-life roles, it seems, there are some no actor will clamor for. "It would be interesting to see what the real deal is," Gibbons says, "but in this political climate, I don't know who you're going to get to take that plunge." ●

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Best Actor

Acting out



After 30 years of classic work, gay actor Nigel Hawthorne goes mad on-screen and wins an Oscar nomination

By Michelle Clarkin



"I'm not somebody who sets himself up as an icon of sexual orientation," says veteran English actor Nigel Hawthorne. "But my private life has never been a secret. I've never been a closet queen." In fact, the 65-year-old Hawthorne is being introduced

to most Americans not as a queen but as a king—in the film *The Madness of King George*. With this bravura performance the unassuming actor, who defines himself as a "quiet man," is making history as the first openly gay Best Actor nominee in the history of the Academy Awards.

"Nigel is immensely modest, and it's genuine," says Thelma Holt,

a longtime friend of Hawthorne and the producer of the Restoration comedy *The Clarendon Marriage*, a hit 1995 London production in which Hawthorne not only stars but makes his directorial debut. "Success came to Nigel late in life," Holt adds. "He was very much a jobbing actor with a vast amount of experience when it happened."

It's ironic that Hawthorne should receive his Oscar nod for playing the tragic King George: He is famed

All-powerful but not all there: Hawthorne as George III

in Britain as a light comic actor on television. He's won four British Academy of Film and Television Awards for his role as scheming senior civil servant Sir Humphrey Appleby in the BBC productions *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*.

But Hawthorne's journey to film stardom began with another tragic role—in *Shadowlands*, based on the true story of theologian, writer, and apparent confirmed bachelor C.S. Lewis, who awoke to love in late middle age only to lose his wife to cancer. Starring as Lewis first in London and then in New York, Hawthorne won numerous critical accolades, including a 1991 Tony Award. And one night during the Broadway run of the show, Hawthorne's audience included English theater director Nicholas Hytner.

"I was knocked out," says Hytner. "I knew Nigel's work well, but he'd never been given a role of such emotional scope." The memory was fresh in Hytner's mind when three months later playwright Alan Bennett gave him a script for *The Madness of King George III*, a darkly comic recounting of the English monarch's descent into madness soon after America's secession as a British colony. Hytner immediately offered Hawthorne the part, and Hawthorne played the king to critical raves for the next 2½ years, collecting the London Drama Critics Award and England's prestigious Laurence Olivier Award in 1992.

"Without *Shadowlands* the choice wouldn't have been quite so obvious," Hytner remembers. "Everybody knew that Nigel could have done the comic and endearing parts of George III, because that's what he was known for. But Nigel has a

fantastic access to emotion."

The actor's private life at the time, Hawthorne now confides, greatly intensified his performance. While his character C.S. Lewis sat nightly beside the bed of his dying wife in *Shadowlands*, Hawthorne repeated the ritual at the

bedside of a lifelong friend who was dying of AIDS-related complications. "It was the most painful experience of my life," he recalls.

Although he feels his sexual identity has never defined him as a person or as an actor, Hawthorne believes it may have allowed for greater depth in the characters he's played. "I'm not scared of showing my emotion, for example," he explains. "And I think a lot of Englishmen are. They like to bottle it all up, and I don't care. So I have that freedom, which perhaps I wouldn't have had I been a married man."

As a matter of fact, Hawthorne has achieved that emotional freedom without sacrificing the joys of marriage. For the past 17 years, he's been in a committed relationship with a 51-year-old writer he refers to only as Trevor. "We're very happy, and we're very lucky," says Hawthorne. "We've had a long relationship. It's been totally successful." Like C.S. Lewis, however, Hawthorne had to wait for love. "Our relationship didn't begin till I was nearly 50. 'It's not a transitory thing,'" he says. "It's for life. We both know that, and I think we're very privileged."

When plans arose for the Samuel Goldwyn film adaptation, it was Bennett who insisted that Hawthorne—who had been replaced in the film version of *Shadowlands* by Anthony Hopkins—remain in the lead. "His stipulation was that both

Nick Hytner and myself be a part of the deal," says Hawthorne. Bennett's confidence was clearly justified; with a total of four Academy Award nominations, *The Madness of King George* is one of 1994's most recognized films.

"The whole thing was an enormously pleasurable experience," remembers Hawthorne. "I'm proud of every second of it. It was done with great integrity, great honesty, and a huge commitment by absolutely everybody right down the line. It was working with a team. You would hardly know that still existed in movies."

A common show-business myth holds that gay actors may be unconvincing in a straight role. But Hytner says the tender relationship between Hawthorne's King George and costar Helen Mirren's Queen Charlotte was sparked by a brilliant on-set chemistry between the two actors. "Helen responded to Nigel's rock-solid character," says Hytner, "and he responded to her spontaneity. What we got was a picture not just of a dynastic marriage between a king of England and a princess from some German principality but also of two middle-aged people fantastically physically at ease with each other."

With regard to Hawthorne and Rupert Everett, another gay actor playing straight in the film, Hytner explains that it's crucial to distinguish homosexuality from effeminacy. "I've worked with effeminate straight actors who were not convincing in bedroom scenes," he says. "But with actors like Nigel and Rupert, their own sexuality has nothing to do with it. Their access to the sexuality of the characters they're playing has everything to do with it."

Like the characters he plays in both *The Madness of King George* and *The Clandestine Marriage*, who are ultimately strengthened by the indignities they suffer, Hawthorne takes a broad view of the human condition. Self-promotion, whether it be waving a flag for his sexual identity or for any other purpose, takes a backseat to a humble and questioning nature.



Mr. and Mrs. King: Hawthorne and fellow Oscar nominee Helen Mirren

KEITH HAMMERSHIRE / THE SAMUEL GOLDWYN CO.

"I'm not scared of showing my emotion," says Hawthorne, "and I think a lot of Englishmen are. They like to bottle it all up, and I don't care. So I have that freedom."

"I loved George," says Hawthorne. "I had a great feeling for him. Now, to get an Oscar nomination, it's something I would have never imagined in a million years happening to me. It's just altered everything. I'm a bit scared of it all, I have to say."

Holt recognizes this unpretentiousness as the mark of a very dignified man. "He's a great leader of a company," she says of Hawthorne's insightful direction of *The Clandestine Marriage*. "Everyone loves him, and he likes ensemble work. The most interesting thing about this play is that it has no star. And this was the play he chose."

For better or worse, however, the Oscar nomination plucks Hawthorne out of the ensemble and exposes him, basically for the first time, to the white-hot light of American publicity. And unlike his long-standing fans in Britain, his new American fans will know from the outset that Hawthorne is gay. Will this change in the actor's image carry with it the potential for negative typecasting?

"Oh, I hope not!" laughs Hytner. "I'm not entirely sure how Hollywood casting works. But I think only that very small group of men whose careers depend on making \$10 million a movie for, to be frank, arousing teenage girls would be worried. And even then, teenage girls love all that!"

As for the March 27 Oscar ceremonies, Hawthorne will be attending, accompanied by Trevor. "My friends have said, 'What about those Oscars—with banks of photographers all clicking away and interviews all the time?'" Hawthorne says with a laugh. "And I said, 'I dread it,' because I'm quite a quiet person. Trevor and I are both very quiet people, and we just want to live and keep the peace."

Doubts aside, however, both partners wouldn't think of missing it. Says Hawthorne: "My idea is to have a good evening and do a bit of star spotting." ●

Best Costume

Drag race

Gay designer Tim Chappel shares a nomination with collaborator Lizzy Gardiner

By Charles Isherwood



"Let me give my gay speech," says 27-year-old costume designer Tim Chappel. "Being gay was very hard while growing up, but all the things that I hated about myself and that everyone else hated about me are now the reasons I have an Oscar nomination." Turning to address his conominee, Lizzy Gardiner, Chappel continues, "Yes, I used to be a go-go dancer, and yes, I was

once two hours late."

With his TV-commercial teeth, deep Australian tan, and compact, sculpted body, Chappel does resemble a go-go boy. But today he and Gardiner are soaking up the sunny aura of an Oscar nomination for their costume designs in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

The appointment Chappel was two hours late for was his first meeting with Gardiner, who was costuming the popular Australian soap opera *E-Street* and looking for an assistant. Fortunately for both, Gardiner took this tardiness in stride. "He said he danced in his underwear at a nightclub," says Gardiner, "and I said, 'You've got the job.'"

Of course, Chappel's talent for gyrating in Jockeys wasn't his only qualification. He grew up in a small town in the Australian sticks, to which he now returns "only when someone dies." The atmosphere was predictably unpleasant for a young boy who didn't conform to Aussie ideals of masculinity, but Chappel lards his anguished-youth stories with generous amounts of humor. "I always had the shit beaten out of me by the girls at school," he jokes. "They used to call me Susan-girl, because if the girls were tomboys, I must be a Susan-girl."

Chappel moved to Sydney at 15 and studied fashion and textile design (and, not so incidentally, "discovered hairdressers and drugs and boys") before landing a costume job

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Gardiner and Chappel are reaping what they sewed.

with the Australian Broadcasting Co. He and Gardiner had been working together for a few years when Stephan Elliott, the writer-director of *Priscilla*, signed them.

Although the spectacular drag creations of the film's 38 costumes practically stole the movie from a notably talented cast, Gardiner and Chappel were working from a budget of \$12,000—a figure that wouldn't support the costuming needs of an episode of an average American sitcom. Yet what they lacked in funding, they made up for in ingenuity.

"We didn't construct things the way they should have been constructed," Gardiner explains. "Stephan kept saying, 'It only has to stay together for one day!'" Adds Chappel: "A lot of the costumes fell apart as we were shooting, but fortunately, we had staple guns and gaffer tape in every color of the rainbow."

The inspiration for the performance outfits came directly from the music used—which added another layer of anxiety. "It was a hassle," Gardiner moans, "because none of the music was cleared for use in the movie until the last minute. We'd be making costumes inspired by a song and praying that the song made it into the movie. On the ABBA song, they cleared the rights the night before we shot the number."

Chappel, who lists among his designing credits touring drag shows such as *Krystle Queens in Berlin* (1992) and *Teen Queens, Baby It's You* (1993), is no slouch as a performer either. That's him lip-synching to Vanessa Williams's "Save the Best for Last" at the film's end.

And although Chappel had considerable drag costuming experience, fitting Terence Stamp for frocks posed new problems. "The first couple of weeks were hard," recalls Gardiner. "Terence had a preconceived notion of how he'd look as a woman."

"Holly Golightly!" whispers Chappel with a grin. "He's a 55-year-old man. I don't know how he thought he was going to look like Audrey Hepburn at 20. But there are some shots when he looks quite beautiful."

Although Stamp was widely touted as a likely bet for an Oscar nomination, Gardiner and Chappel garnered the film's only nod. And it has already changed the course of their lives. Both have moved to Los Angeles, acquired agents, and begun pursuing careers in the Hollywood jungle.

They are only the latest in a long line of Australian film artists—the likes of Judy Davis, Mel Gibson, George Miller, and Fred Schepisi—who have sought success in Hollywood.

Gardiner and Chappel have decided to go their separate ways for both artistic and economic reasons.

"It's not very practical to have two designers," Chappel explains. "For one thing, you've got to split the wages." And Gardiner prefers to work in contemporary film, whereas

Chappel hopes to concentrate on period pictures. Gardiner is beginning work on *Bound*, "a film about two lesbians," in her description, for Dino De Laurentiis. Chappel, meanwhile, is angling to land work on a Venetian period drama called *The Honest Courtesan*.

Whether or not they take the stage before the Oscars' 1 billion TV viewers, both Chappel and Gardiner laud Jeffrey Kurland's work in *Bullets Over Broadway* and avow that he's the likely winner. The other contenders are Colleen Atwood for *Little Women*, April Ferry for *Maverick*, and Moidele Bickel for *Queen Margot*.

Still, plainly awed by the power of the nomination itself, Chappel says simply, "There wouldn't have been any point in coming to Los Angeles without it. Before the nomination we were just a couple of Australian designers who had done a film about drag queens." ●

Best Documentary

Real life

Three lesbian filmmakers get Oscar nods for documentaries touching on coming out to family

By Michele Tort



Oscar night will be a truly gay family affair for San Francisco filmmakers Dee Mosbacher, Frances Reid, and Deborah Hoffmann. Mosbacher and Reid's *Straight From the Heart*, a 24-minute film they codirected and coproduced, has been nominated in the Best Documentary Short Subject category. And Hoffmann, Reid's lover for the past ten years and the editor of *Straight From the Heart*, directed *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*, which has been nominated for Best Documentary Feature. Adding to all this, Reid was the cinematographer for both projects.

"I doubt there's been another lesbian couple that has had nominations in the same year," says Reid. "We were both blown away."

As for Mosbacher, a psychiatrist as well as videographer, the nomination marks her second 15 minutes of fame. The first came after her outing as the lesbian daughter of wealthy Republican bigwig Robert Mosbacher, former president George Bush's chief fund-raiser and his secretary of commerce. It should come as no surprise that her film deals with parents of lesbians and gays coming to terms with their children's sexuality.

"I was inspired to make it by see-



ing *The Gay Agenda* [the radical right's antigay video]," says the 46-year-old Mosbacher, who is as politically liberal as her father is conservative. "I was appalled by the lies and distortions. I could have gotten very depressed, but I decided to do something about it."

The former medical director of San Mateo County, Calif.'s mental health department, Mosbacher had already created audiovisuals countering homophobia for fellow doctors. And she has now completed a video called *Out for a Change: Addressing Homophobia in Women's Sports*, featuring tennis legend Martina Navratilova.

When she got the idea for *Straight From the Heart*, Mosbacher contacted Reid, 50, a longtime friend, for assistance. Reid—whose first independent film production was the 1977 lesbian mothering documentary *In the Best Interests of the Children*—shot the video, while Mosbacher conducted the interviews and raised \$65,000, much of it from her own pocket. "We kind of did the project in our spare time," says Reid.

Reid's parents are deceased, but her sister and nieces are big boosters. "In fact," says Reid, "my nieces are going to come to the awards with us."

Mosbacher has gotten a mixed reaction from her family to both the film and her lesbianism. Her two sisters are great supporters and fans of the film, but she doesn't think her brother, who is less accepting, has seen it. She has little contact with her father's current wife (when Dee Mosbacher was 21, her mother died) but has a warm connection with her father—and he loved the film. "He's very supportive of me," she says of her dad, who is now out of government and working as a businessman in Texas. "He's just got very different politics."

Says Reid: "What made the film work was the genuine, heartfelt people who are in it." The subjects in



Straight are just that: rather conservative, Christian Middle American

who've discovered they can love and accept their gay kids despite any prejudices they might have had in the past. Their views are especially credible because of who they are: a police chief whose lesbian daughter is on the force, a Mormon family in Idaho who nursed their son as he died of AIDS complications, and an African-American woman with two lesbian daughters. A minister, standing in front of stained-glass windows, delivers the connecting narration.

"It takes away the stereotypes. These are real people," says retired Portland, Ore., police chief Tom Potter, one of those real people. Potter—

who was passed over by the Clinton administration for a

job as top cop for a nationwide community policing effort because other police chiefs indicated they were embarrassed by his outspokenness against homophobia—is delighted about the Oscar nomination. "Obviously, more people are going to start looking at the film," he says, "and if it wins an Academy Award, a lot more people will watch it."

Oddly enough, considering the recognition it has received from the Academy, *Straight* was rejected for screening by San Francisco's lesbian and gay film festival: not sharp-edged enough, Reid and Mosbacher were told. "It's definitely *not* cutting-

edge," agrees Reid. "It's made to appeal to the mainstream."

"It's for the majority of Americans, who may not be aware that they know someone lesbian or gay and have serious questions and concerns about homosexuality," adds Mosbacher. "If they've only been exposed to the rhetoric of the radical right, they haven't heard the whole story."

Mosbacher proudly recounts stories of lesbians and gay men who

Hoffmann and Reid met while they were working on *The Times of Harvey Milk*, which won an Academy Award in 1985. "The footage looked beautiful, so I'd call the cinematographer [Reid] and tell her that," says Hoffmann. "Well, that makes people fall in love! But nothing happened until the film was over." That's when she invited Reid to Cape Cod for a postproduction celebration—and the rest is romantic history.

When Reid and Hoffmann saw what was happening to Doris Hoffmann, being filmmakers, they started recording her on video, which the octogenarian seemed to enjoy. Deborah Hoffmann tells her mother's poignant story herself on-camera and shows remarkable good humor about the travails with the disease.

"The film is a gem. It brings all Debbie's talents to the forefront," says Rob Epstein, co-creator of *The Times of Harvey Milk*. "Debbie has a great sense of humor—also a great sense of irony and a great sense of drama and tragedy. It's a winning combination."

The film ultimately became a philosophical reflection on living in the moment—which is all someone with memory loss from Alzheimer's can do. It's also about a daughter's coping with her own loss of the childhood memories she can no longer share with her mother. "It's as much—if not more—about me," says Hoffmann. "It felt voyeuristic to make it just about her. But she's so great on-screen that she stole the show."

Although Doris Hoffmann doesn't know the film exists, the director says her mother, now 87 and living in a group home for people with Alzheimer's, probably wouldn't be able to recognize herself in it anyway. "I have no way to tell

her about all the recognition she is getting," says Hoffmann with a sad edge to her voice.

Complaints was a huge hit at the San Francisco festival, winning the audience award, yet it contains only a couple of minutes of gay material—when Hoffmann describes her mother's reaction to her daughter's lesbianism, pre- and post-Alzheimer's. "It's the strange upside of the disease," explains Hoffmann. "Before Alzheimer's, she was OK about my being a lesbian but uncomfortable about it. Afterward, she became 100% accepting."

The nominations of the two films reflect the continuing openness of the Academy's documentary committee to gay-themed work. "I suspect that documentary filmmakers are sort of a more liberal lot," notes Mosbacher. Adds Reid: "I don't know that I'd say there were a surprisingly large number of nominations for gay documentaries compared to the large number of good lesbian and gay filmmakers in the country, but homophobia doesn't seem to affect how choices are being made."

Reid, in fact, has been either principal or additional cinematographer on two other Oscar-winning documentaries besides *Harvey Milk*: one about the San Francisco Opera chorus, *In the Shadow of the Stars*, and the



Straight From the Heart

Stories of ordinary Americans: Former Portland, Ore., police chief Tom Potter and his lesbian daughter

sent the film back home and found it "really took their parents to the next step." But Mosbacher also envisioned the film as an organizing tool, and she's now trying to raise funds to distribute it to churches, schools, and legislators. "There's been some receptivity to showing it on the Hill," she says, admitting that her Capitol ties give her entrée to the D.C. power elite. "I want it to be seen by the 66 senators who voted to deny federal funding to schools that teach homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle."

While *Straight From the Heart* demonstrates that the political is personal, *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* shows that the personal is universal. Eight years ago Hoffmann's widowed mother, Doris, began showing signs of a failing memory. It took a long time, however, to get a diagnosis of Alzheimer's. "Frances and I were running ourselves ragged trying to keep the situation under control," says Hoffmann, who's 47 and has been editing films for 15 years, including two works by the late gay filmmaker Marlon Riggs.



Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter

Learning to live in the here and now: Deborah Hoffmann and her mother, who has Alzheimer's disease

AIDS quilt-themed *Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt*. But that doesn't make her blasé about this nomination. "It is not old hat to me," she says. "It's the first nomination with my name on it, and that feels

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very different and very exciting."

Both Reid and Mosbacher could wind up back on the Oscar nominations list next year also. *Skin Deep*, an hour-long film about race relations on college campuses that Reid produced and directed, comes out in April, while Mosbacher's *Out for a Change* is already available on videocassette and will soon be entered in film festivals. Mosbacher has taken up video making almost full-time: She is working on projects about lesbian moms and homophobia in men's sports and a response to the radical right's video *Gay Rights/Special Rights*, all of which Reid might work on with her.

Hoffmann, though, is unsure of what project to take on next. "Editing for the moment has lost its thrill," says the first-time director. In the meantime, she and Reid ponder what

Thoughts of an acceptance speech have crossed Mosbacher's mind: "I think about it in the shower. But I already hear that music they play when they want you to stop."

to wear to the frou-frou awards ceremony. Ten years ago, when *Harvey Milk* won, Reid donned an antique Japanese kimono, and Hoffmann appeared in a custom-made silver jumpsuit. "I haven't had the nerve yet to see if I still fit into it," says Hoffmann. Offers Reid: "I think we'll have to form a

committee to help us figure out what we're wearing."

Although Oscar nominees always insist that the real honor is just being nominated, Mosbacher admits that thoughts of an acceptance speech have crossed her mind more than a few times. "I think about it in the shower," she says. "It would be stupid to get the chance to speak and not do anything. But in my head I already hear that music they play when they want you to stop. The speech has got to be short and sweet, whatever it is."

Certainly she will talk about ending prejudice and perhaps about how gay men and lesbians are just like many other people—with loving families, long-term romances and friendships, and a strong sense of activism and community. Just like these three women. ●



Best Foreign Language Film

A tasteful treat

Cuban Jorge Perugorria plays gay and goes to the Oscars

By Jorge Morales



Rumor has it in Cuba that when director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea was casting the gay lead in *Strawberry and Chocolate*, a Best Foreign Language Film nominee for 1994, he dismissed all the gay actors who auditioned because he found them too butch. At least one person is willing to believe the story: Jorge Perugorria, for whom the twisted tale of Cuban sexual politics turned out to be his proverbial big break. "I guess the others must have come across as too repressed," says Perugorria, who eventually landed the role of Diego.

In fact, Perugorria was almost too gay for the part. "When Tomás came in to my screen test, he said, 'No, this is wrong, take those curls out, comb your hair back,'" Perugorria recalls. "A good friend of mine who is gay

said to me when I was preparing for the part, 'Being a faggot isn't a full-time job,' meaning that gays aren't effeminate all the time. I found that advice very useful."

The suggestion worked. Perugorria's lauded screen debut as the flamboyantly gay artist who falls for a straight and uptight Communist has catapulted the 29-year-old stage actor from local obscurity to international stardom. *Strawberry and Chocolate* is on its way to becoming the most successful Cuban film of all time. And Perugorria is now receiving acting offers from director Pedro Almodóvar and using his newly found success to be a spokesman against oppression.

"When I first started on this project, I wasn't thinking of an audience outside Cuba," says Perugorria as he rides in a limousine to a Hollywood hotel. "All I knew is that I wanted to work with this story. But I never expected any of this, all the attention, an Oscar nomination. It's a surprise."

A classically trained stage actor, Perugorria has performed the work of some of the world's best-known

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gay playwrights, including Tennessee Williams, Jean Genet, and Federico García Lorca, but he had never played a gay character. So when Gutiérrez Alea offered him the role of Diego, Perugorria snapped it up. "Every actor," he says, "should aspire to play a role with such depth and complexity as Diego."

None of Perugorria's training, however, had prepared him for the flak. His sympathetic portrayal of someone who is openly critical of the revolution has been hugely controversial in Fidel Castro's Cuba. In the movie Diego denounces the government's persecution of gays and their internment in forced labor camps in the '60s. Yet, Perugorria says, *Strawberry and Chocolate* is not so much about homosexuality in Cuba as it is about diversity.

"The film is really a plea for tolerance," he says. "It's a tough job getting respect for individuality because everything is seen in terms of the common good. The Cuban revolution wanted to create a utopia, and everyone who didn't fit into that plan was rejected by society. That's what happened to Diego. There are many Diegos in Cuba. They're there struggling for recognition."

Gutiérrez Alea agrees: "I think that this film is coming at an important time in Cuba's history. It is not so much a gay film as it is a humanitarian film. *Strawberry and Chocolate* points out a basic problem in Cuba: our inability to accept others who are different from ourselves."

Perugorria believes there is an enormous problem between his generation and the generation that brought the revolution. "They split the island in two," he says. "They turned the country into a Shakespearean drama where Montagues are fighting Capulets, and it is my generation that has suffered most. It's time for us to give each other the final embrace that you see in the movie—which is an embrace of tolerance and understanding."

On a personal level Perugorria quietly admits that he dates "mostly women." However, he politely dismisses questions about his private life in Havana, where he lives two blocks away from the Plaza de la Revolución. "Ambiguity," he says, "has given me very good results." ●

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must study it from the first moment it enters the body. Obviously, scientists cannot go around infecting humans with HIV.

Another argument that's commonly made is, "Well, if animal research is so great, why hasn't it given us a cure for AIDS?"

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Breaking the Surface by Greg Louganis with Eric Marcus (Random House, \$23)

Anyone who can read Greg Louganis's story without crying must have a heart of stone. His autobiography, *Breaking the Surface*, is crowded with devastating events, from his birth in 1960 to a pair of teenagers who put him up for adoption to his testing positive for HIV in 1987. Along the way, he was called "fag" and "nigger" by grade school classmates, alternately abused and neglected by his alcoholic father, and manipulated by a series of hostile boyfriends. "I wouldn't wish my life on anyone," he writes. Yet despite his careening from ecstatic highs—he was the first male diver in the history of the Olympics to win four gold medals—to terrifying lows—who can forget that infamous diving-board accident at the Seoul Olympics?—Louganis comes across like everybody's likable next-door neighbor. Miraculously, he



sounds kind of normal. This is partly because Louganis writes about himself so unaffectedly, in a clear, open style that must owe something to his coauthor, Eric Marcus. Louganis talks about suicide attempts, drug problems, and spousal violence without turning his story into an Oprah interview or an episode of *Melrose Place*. He just says what happened, in a steady tone of voice that doesn't back away from complications and pain. Surprisingly, he is just as calm about his successes. After all, his professional life is a virtually unbroken series of triumphs. Louganis won his first Olympic medal, a silver, when he was 16 years old. By the time he reached the 1984 Olympics, he was considered a shoo-in for two gold medals. There seems never to have been a moment when anyone doubted his preeminence. Interestingly, however, Louganis casts himself as the underdog. For most of his life, when he looked in the

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mirror, what he saw was a failure—specifically, a “retard” and a “sissy.” “No matter how many nice things people would say about my looks,” he writes about his sudden fame in the early ‘80s, “I could never accept that I was attractive.”

In other words, Louganis grew up like a lot of gay men, mocked by the memory of the taunting he suffered in grade school playgrounds. Remarkably, movingly, he got over it. “I may cry easily, but I never give up,” he writes, redefining the playground sissy as a success story, in spite of himself.

—John Weir

Film Passion Play

Priest directed by Antonia Bird (Miramax)

In *Priest*, a timely, audacious feature debut, British filmmaker Antonia Bird probes not one but several taboos within the Catholic priesthood: celibacy and the lack thereof, the increasing impotence of the clergy amid the problems of the modern world, and—last but certainly not least—homosexuality.

Father Greg Pilkington (Linus Roache) is a handsome young priest who finds his conventional training challenged by his new parish in working-class Liverpool. Greg encounters his first surprise in the outspoken Father Matthew Thomas (Tom Wilkinson), the parish pastor, who preaches politics from the pulpit and lives openly with his housekeeper (Cathy Tyson). Greg is shocked by this renunciation of celibacy. But



Forgive me, Father:
Roache in *Priest*

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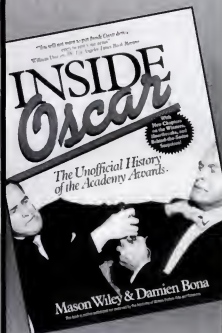
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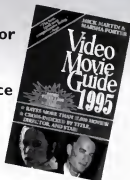
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on the other hand, he grows increasingly uncomfortable as he tries to impose traditional religious values on the difficult lives of his parishioners.

The tearful confession of a young girl who reveals an incestuous relationship with her father casts Greg into a deep moral crisis. Bound by his vow of confessional silence, Greg realizes he is powerless to help her.

Besides, Greg is having his own identity crisis. One evening, stripping off his collar, pulling on his blue jeans, and retrieving a black leather jacket from the back of his closet, he heads for the local gay bar. Before long, Greg finds himself in the throes of passionate sex with a good-looking stranger.

Deeply confused by his own "deviant" attachment and his failure to help his needy flock, Greg becomes a tormented soul who desperately needs moral redemption. Unfortunately, he's seeking it in a bureaucratic environment that's callous and impersonal.

Father Thomas's challenge to the straitjacket of the Catholic Church is just one highlight in a film that combines a rare maturity with a passionate challenge to the status quo. *Priest* is inhabited by characters grappling with moral dilemmas in very recognizable and realistic ways. The film transcends the earnest weight of its subjects through the sympathy it shows them. Each figure is a real, living person torn by conflicting expectations and contradictory feelings; even the rigid priests are three-dimensional.

Priest was originally commissioned as a four-hour miniseries by the BBC, which later decided to abort the project. Jimmy McGovern, who based his script on a true case, then compressed his screenplay into a tight feature-length narrative.

A former stage and TV director, Bird stands for a brand of passionate filmmaking on timely social issues. It's to her credit that the film's serious themes are treated with a sense of humor—and tasteful discretion. In the hands of a less compassionate director, *Priest* might have easily become sappy and sentimental. Even so, its effort to humanize its characters and to make its issues palatable to the general public gives the film a tone that's progressively melodramatic. After a while too many big climac-

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Annie Lennox returns with an engaging interpretation of "No More I Love You's" from her new album, *Medusa*. This follows her multiplatinum, critically acclaimed debut, *Diva*. The album is in stores March 14th. See the new video on MTV and VH1.

2 Artist: Elisabeth Leonskaja/Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra/Hugh Wolff
Track: "Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No. 2"
Album: Sensual Classics Too (Teldec/Warner)

An absolutely fa-a-bulous collection with over 75 minutes of musical passion for men. *Sensual Too* is just in time for Valentine's Day and includes heart-throbbing works by Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Mozart, Ravel, and others.

3 Artist: Judy Garland
Track: "Over the Rainbow"
Album: The Envelope Please... Academy Award Winning Songs 1934-1993 (Rhino)
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4 Artist: Doris Day
Track: "Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)"
Album: The Envelope Please... Academy Award Winning Songs 1934-1993 (Rhino Records)

This classic is included in the box set, which also features original performances from Fred Astaire, Henry Mancini, Debby Boone, Donna Summer, Lionel Richie, and Stevie Wonder.

5 Artist: Fem2Fem
Track: "Where Did Love Go?"
Album: Animus (Critique)
The unforgettable and outrageous Fem2Fem has returned with *Animus*, the highly anticipated second album from a group that excited and aroused everyone's minds and ears in 1994.

6 Artist: Danny Tenaglia
Track: "Hard & Soul"
Album: Hard & Soul (Tribal America/I.R.S.)

The second single from veteran dance music producer/remixer Danny Tenaglia. On this track the talents of gospel-trained Carole Sylvan are featured. The album *Hard & Soul* on Tribal America, will be available on limited vinyl, CD, and cassette March 21.

7 Artist: Cynthia Crane & Mike Renzi
Track: "A Wet Night (Is a Dry Martini)"
Album: Smoky Bar Songs for the No-Smoking Section (Lookout!)

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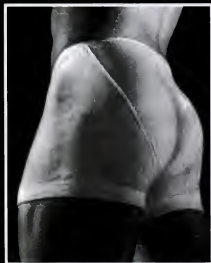
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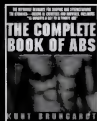


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tic scenes and raw emotions seem always on the verge of explosion.

Uniformly accomplished and credible acting compensates for the script's shortcomings. Yet there's no doubt that the drama would have been less forceful if the title role had been played by an actor less handsome and sexually alluring than Roache. That said, these are minor cavils about a film that personalizes political issues with great emotional impact. *Priest* is a poignant story that has been greeted with standing ovations—and genuine tears—at every film festival it has played.

—Emanuel Levy

Yael Swerdelow



Wolfe and D'Agostino merge in *Bar Girls*.

Swap meet

Bar Girls directed by Marita Giovanni
(Orion Classics)

Girl picks up girl at bar, takes her home. They talk about their lovers. Soon *they're* lovers. They move in together, fight, split up, make up. Just another slice o' daily lesbian life, but this time it's on the big screen, in an adaptation of Laurant Hoffman's play (which had a long run in Los Angeles). *Bar Girls* belongs to the newest wave of lesbian films, where coming out is no longer the issue, but *being* out—and about—is.

The main bar girls are sharp-tongued Loretta (Nancy Allison Wolfe), who writes a cartoon show about a female superhero, and sweetly innocent Rachel (Liza D'Agostino), an actress. They quickly binge and merge, but their lives are complicated by partner-swapping exes, by seductive cop J.R. (Camila Griggs), and by Loretta's out-of-proportion jealousy.

Hoffman's script has funny lines—especially those delivered by the attractive jock, Annie (Lisa Parker), and the

wavering heterosexual, Veronica (Justine Slater), who begs her friend Loretta to "get me a lesbian!" But the film's psychodramas are painful—and painfully familiar. "True love" seems only a false veneer in light of the abundance of incestuous, dysfunctional relationships. Been there, done that—and who wants to be reminded of it?

Shot on a low, low budget by the play's original director, Marita Giovanni, *Bar Girls* lacks the cinematic flair of a *Co Fish*, and the bar itself doesn't even have the requisite ambience of sound, smoke, and sleaze. The film can't shake its stagy origins, the acting is uneven (though Wolfe and Griggs impress), and the music (by the Ringling Sisters) is rather oddball—but the film still strikes a chord, especially when Loretta falls into the arms of a most unlikely partner. Their sex scene steams up the screen far more than Rachel and Loretta's earlier lovey-dovey encounter—proving, perhaps, that *bad* bar girls have the most fun.

—Michele Kort

Music Diet Elton

Elton John, *Made in England*
(Rocket/Island)

Examining Elton John's creative output in recent years has often been akin to sitting through a marathon screening of diet Coke commercials—the wildly infectious melodies relentlessly attack and distract the brain from painfully simplistic, one-dimensional lyrics. Even before he took a swan dive over the musical cliff into the land of Disney cartoons and "circles of life," the one-time Hamlet of pop was slipping into a previously uncharacteristic state of



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mush. On *Made in England*, John's first album for his new Rocket Records imprint, he proves that any hope of a rebound back onto more solid ground may be woefully lost.

Taken on a purely surface level, the singer-songwriter's umpteenth collection is actually aural delight. Produced by John with Greg Penny, who has previously helmed sets for k.d. lang, each song is meticulously arranged, with layers of rich instrumentation. Their chemistry is unquestionable, as evident on songs such as "Believe," the first single, which soars with a delicious blend of quasi-symphonic strings, aggressive rock guitars, and honky-tonk piano lines. And John's voice remains a unique tool of heart and passion that does not appear to have aged one bit over more than 20 years of touring and recording.

The complex and thoroughly satisfying musical tone of *Made in England* makes its limp, often soul-free lyrical content all the more frustrating. Largely penned by John's longtime partner, Bernie Taupin, lines such as "Pain is war / pain is peace" and "There's something about distance that gets to us all" may pass muster from a lesser talent but not from the same mind that has formed a vast catalog of material of vivid characters and tales. Unfair though it might be, it is difficult not to draw a connecting line between the softball safety of John's current lyrics and his permanent move from the queer closet in recent years. And John himself is not necessarily to blame. After all, could an uptight Republican Middle America digest a song like "Daniel," for example, from an openly gay man? In this case, we may never know.

—Larry Flick

The contender

Melissa Ferrick, *Willing to Wait* (Atlantic)

Melissa Ferrick is known as "the other Melissa" in certain circles, a moniker that refers to the fact that she has chosen the same career, has the same first name, and is the same sexuality as the Mother of all the Misses—Ms. Etheridge.

Yet musically, Ferrick and Etheridge actually share little in common. Ferrick is a more intellectual artist

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than Etheridge, more interested in exploring the emotional possibilities of language, particularly its ability to express her most abstract hopes and desires. This is not to say that Ferrick's work is overly cerebral. Although she occasionally trips over her own poetic ambition, overloading her lyrics with images that get in the way of her feelings, she is far more capable of expressing both the subtle and the cataclysmic shifts of the heart than Etheridge is because she instinctively recognizes that emotion originates in the mind.

Mama Melissa, on the other hand, is guided first and foremost by a blind—not to mention bland—libidinous drive that cares not for the limitations of language or thought. If she

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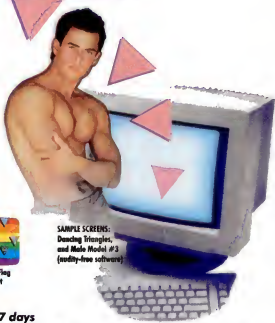
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can't find a more exact word or image to express what she's feeling, she'll choose a cliché and sing it *really* loud to make sure you feel her passion.

Ultimately Ferrick has far more potential as a musician than Etheridge, as is evident from the progress she has made between her first album, *Massive Blur*, and her current CD, *Willing to Wait*. Where her debut was all in-your-face passion and gloom-and-doom angst, offering both gripping emotion and distracting self-absorption, the new disc shows off a more focused Ferrick, addressing her feelings with the wisdom and insight of a woman far beyond her years. As if to invite listeners more deeply into her heart, Ferrick has chosen to set her lyrics—dealing mostly with her search for love and the forging of identity—in a spare, acoustic setting that will remind listeners of the early work of James Taylor and the first two Indigo Girls albums.

This album, like her first, is also filled with accomplished melodies, the catchiest being the exuberant "I Am Done," a song proclaiming her immunity to romance, and the furious strumfest "Till You're Dead," a musical marriage vow to a lover the singer hopes to spend the rest of her life with. The album's only misfire is "Cotta Go Now," a song lampooning racism, homophobia, and general narrow-mindedness. The lyrics straddle the line between irony and sincerity, leaving the song stranded in a nebulous haze of political correctness.

Yet with her considerable talent there's no reason to think that Ferrick couldn't in the future come up with a political statement as powerful as any of her love songs. If there's any justice in this world, someday when people speak of "the other Melissa," they'll be talking about Melissa Etheridge.

—Peter Galvin

The reviewers...

- John Weir is the author of *The Irreversible Decline of Eddie Socket*.
- Emanuel Levy is a film critic for *Variety* and the author of six books on film.
- Michele Kort writes for *Shape* and the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*.
- Larry Flick is dance music/singles reviews editor at *Billboard*.
- Peter Galvin is a writer at large for *The Advocate*.

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IT'S OSCAR TIME AGAIN, WHICH MEANS YOU'RE going to start reading lots of columns that begin with that sentence—including this one. If you're still with me, it means you have a generally healthy homosexual interest in (a) movies, (b) movie stars, (c) gorgeous women in ugly dresses, (d) hunks in tuxedos, and (e) earnest lesbian documentarians with political agendas and ugly dresses. For hunks in ugly dresses, you'll have to wait for the Tonys.

For the past six years, I have been part of the team of writers that comes up with much of what you hear coming out of the mouths of those babes. The first show I actually shared credit for was the infamous Snow White year—although I honestly did not come up with (or write) that particular number. In truth, if you are an Oscar buff, you know in your deepest heart of darkness that it was no worse than Teri Garr dancing on an airplane wing while singing "Flying Down to Rio." Only Rio didn't sue. Snow White had more hype, and she also had Rob Lowe, who had the misfortune of performing a much more scandalous number on another videotape that was unearthed two weeks later. Because of the brouhaha with Disney, the Academy has deleted the piece from its official tapes of the show. I keep hoping they'll put the other Rob Lowe number on instead.

In the years I have been doing the show, we have also been gifted with sea horses and crabs singing tunes from *The Little Mermaid*, Plácido Domingo doing the mambo, and a bunch of chorus boys in buffalo skins slouching around a fake campfire to the strains of the theme from *Dances With Wolves*. It makes me feel like the whole world owes Allan Carr a box of chocolates.

Since the no-host SNOW show, the proceedings have been reined by Billy or Whoopi. (If we could get Robin to join in, we could do Oscar Relief.) They are both total delights, and this year when they both found other things to do with themselves, I thought I would get to revert to my old Oscar Chinese food, laughing and pointing and flinging the occasional egg roll at the screen. (Jack Valenti was a favorite target.)

Like a true AA follower (as in Academy Awards, not 12 steps), I never cared for Oscar parties. Somebody always talked through the songs or Vanessa Redgrave's speech or the costume parade, in which elegant runway models were forced to dress up as the farmers in *Places in the Heart*. There was always a pool, and it was always won by some bimbo who hadn't been to the movies all year but picked all the winners that had the same names as her dead cats. Somebody always asked—loudly and

more than once—what the hell art direction was and why the British pictures weren't eligible for the foreign-language film award.

So I would stay in my West Hollywood apartment, which was just as well, because Oscar night is a national holiday in the Creative City. Absolutely *everybody* tunes in, and out here that means silence reigns from about 4:30 p.m., which is when the local stations (and now E!) begin broadcasting the equivalent of the pregame show. It's a 90-minute orgy of limousine disgorgements and Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger bravely facing broad daylight and high winds to stand on a platform and chat with Army Archerd, the razor-sharp columnist who is the only conscious link between the new Hollywood and the old. If Army ever retires, it will be to the Smithsonian. At 6 o'clock the actual show starts, still in broad daylight. And for the next few hours—if you keep your windows

open—you will hear ricocheting from canyon to canyon shrill exclamations such as "Ohmigod, is that Demi Moore? What has she got on?" At about 7:30 the pizza-delivery boy arrives: "Domino's. Got your pizza. Did you see Demi Moore? What did she have on?"

I won't be indulging in this ritual this year. I have once again been asked to work, this time with David Letterman.

It's going to be an interesting year. Not only is Dave based in New York, but he is really not a Hollywood player. Billy and Whoopi and everybody else who has hosted the show are movie stars. Even Johnny Carson, when he was hosting, was based in Burbank and widely conceded to be as much of a star as anyone else in town and as much of an inside industry force. Letterman is a true maverick as far as the movies are concerned. The fear is that he won't really be at the party—he'll be standing outside on the deck making fun of the party. I think he's too smart for that. I also think he has broadened his base—if that isn't too Oprah an analogy—and has a real love of movies and the idea of movie stars. But he is Dave. As they say at Forest Lawn: Remains to be seen.

As for this year's crop of gay protests, rape is not sex, and those who can't differentiate probably shouldn't see *Pulp Fiction* or any other movie beyond *The Lion King*. And if you really think that Scar in *The Lion King* is a gay stereotype, you need to spend a few weeks in London or snuggled in with the films of Laurence Olivier or Jeremy Irons or Alec Guinness.

This is also the year of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, with its truly noble depiction of a gay couple facing life, death, and straight people. It's nominated for Best Picture, and its hunk star will be there in a tuxedo. So break out the kung pao chicken and enjoy the carnival.

If you are an Oscar buff, you know it's no worse than Teri Garr dancing on an airplane wing...

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The Buzz

CAROL GORMAN



"It seems to me that the creative arts are filled with remarkable gay people doing fabulous things," says Tom

Schumacher, gay executive producer of Disney's *The Lion King*. It was Schumacher who personally enlisted gay pop superstar Elton John to compose songs for the animated blockbuster, now a Best Song Oscar shoo-in with three nominations.

Of course, John is only the latest gay artist to waltz Disney to the Oscars. Howard Ashman won for *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* and worked on the Oscar-winning lyrics of *Aladdin* until his death in 1991 from AIDS complications. "This company wisely has no restrictions about the kind of artist we will work with," says Schumacher. So when will we see a gay Disney animated character? "In shows now in production," Schumacher told *The Buzz*, "there are no characters that are openly gay." So for now, Disney's only on-screen fairy is still Tinkerbell.

Broadway bound? Ever since Tom Hanks outed—er, thanked—his high school drama teacher, Rawley Farnsworth, at the 1993 Academy Awards,

Farnsworth has been flooded with praise. "I've heard from more than 400 former students," says the 70-year-old retiree. "I've even heard from complete strangers."



PHILLIP CARUSO

Hanks

be. It's made a lot of money."

For his money, though, Farnsworth prefers *Philadelphia*, and he's urged his former student to stretch his talents with a stint on Broadway. "Tom could do Noël Coward," says Farnsworth. "He's headed in that direction."

The lottery: Producer Duncan Kenworthy (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, nominated for Best Picture) says wild horses couldn't keep him from attending the 1994 Academy Awards show. "You joke about things," he told *The Buzz*. "Then, when it happens, you feel like

OVERHEARD



DOCTOR: *Homosexuality.* It's not a pleasant word, but let us not panic unduly. It's often a passing phase with girls Yvonne's age.

MOTHER: She's always been a normal, happy child.

DOCTOR: Oh, it can strike at any time, and adolescents are particularly vulnerable.

MOTHER: What about the vomiting?

From *Heavenly Creatures* (Miramax), nominated for Best Original Screenplay (by Frances Walsh and Peter Jackson)



MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

RED: I hear the sisters have taken a real shine to you.

ANDY: I don't suppose it would help any if I explained to them that I'm not homosexual.

RED: Neither are they. You have to be human first, and they don't qualify.

From *The Shawshank Redemption* (Columbia), nominated for seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay (by Frank Darabont)



STEPHEN MORLEY

Two stars and a producer: Kenworthy (center) with Andie MacDowell and Hugh Grant

you've won the lottery."

Part of what he liked about Richard Curtis's script, Kenworthy said, was the idea of a gay couple as the "moral center of the film." In fact, the reading of W.H. Auden's "Funeral Blues" by bereaved gay character Matthew prompted a reissue of Auden's poetry that has spent 30 weeks on England's best-seller list.

Meanwhile, The Buzz wondered, who was that new boyfriend pictured with Matthew at the film's end? "He had to be incredibly good-looking," joked Kenworthy. "The only person we could find was...the producer."

Short and sweet: After being honored at film festivals from San Francisco to Berlin, *Trevor*, a coming-out story produced by Randy Stone and Peggy Rajski, may soon get the biggest prize of all: an Academy Award for Best Achievement in Live Action Short Film. The 18-minute movie captures the sometimes painful life of a gay teenager, from his attempted suicide to his idolatry of Diana Ross.

Plans are in the works to distribute the film to schools along with a discussion guide. "Trevor was a labor of love," Stone told The Buzz. "Eighty people went to the set at 5 in the morning and worked their butts off for no money, all for the Trevors of the world."

Little women: Frank Darabont, director and screenwriter of *The Shawshank Redemption*, says the male prison rapists portrayed in his Oscar-nominated film are not gay. "I hope not too many people misread that and took offense, because that was certainly not the intention," Darabont told The Buzz. "The prison rapist tends not to be gay on the outside. He tends to be a rapist on the out-

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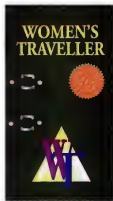
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side. When these people wind up behind bars and are denied women as targets, they just sort of switch gears."

Darabont admits that because these characters are referred to as bull queers and sisters, some "yahoos" in audiences have viewed the villains as gay and have even applauded their defeat with antigay slurs. "That disturbed me," says Darabont. "That kind of shit—it's like racism. It lurks. There will always be a percentage among us who cannot stand people who are different from themselves. As far as I'm concerned, gays aren't represented in my film."

Forrest fire: "Controversial themes have never been a deterrent for me," says *Forrest Gump* producer Steve Tisch. He's not talking about *Gump*, nominated for 13 Oscars after a mere nine years in development hell. Instead, Tisch means his next film, *Rebekka Armstrong*, the true story of the September 1986 *Playboy* Playmate who came out as an HIV-positive lesbian in 1994.



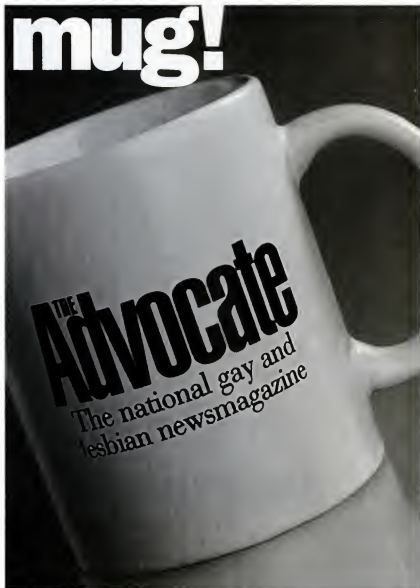
Tisch

"Rebekka's story fits my criteria of educating, entertaining, and maybe most important, empowering," Tisch told *The Buzz*. The tougher the project, added the gay-friendly producer, the more determined he is. "There's a part of me that likes to beat the system. When I'm told no, I find it motivational."

Comedy tonight: With "Comedy in Film" as this year's Academy Awards ceremony theme, the name of the late Martha Raye is likely to come up. Meanwhile, her widower, Mark Harris, is definitely getting on with his life. Not only is he marketing a line of politically incorrect furs, but the 46-year-old Harris has also spent more than \$40,000 on plastic surgery—including a \$4,000 scrotum tuck—with an eye toward attracting the gents.

"Yes, I'm looking for a boyfriend," Harris told *The Buzz*, speaking from his hospital bed in Burbank, Calif. "I had a little French boyfriend, but he got married." But Harris remains upbeat. "I'm being set up with a politician at the Kennedy Center," he noted, "for the opening of *Carmen*."

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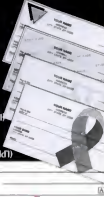
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Tough love



NEWT GINGRICH HAS UNBURDENED HIMSELF OF a painful secret: "I don't believe that the taxpayers should pay for a program to teach you effective methods of sadomasochistic interaction." The House speaker was explaining his opposition to gay-positive curricula for schoolchildren, but there was something very peculiar about his rationale. No curriculum being taught or proposed by gay educators contains any references to S/M, let alone information about how to do it safely and effectively.

Yet on its face Gingrich's fictive program is a fascinating suggestion. I suspect that if such a curriculum had been implemented 25 years ago, the new Republican majority in Congress would find much less support for its proposals to punish teenage mothers, starve welfare recipients, and pull the plug on immigrants who need a hospital bed. If every voter had been educated in the methods and principles of safe, sane, and consensual sadomasochism, the House would never have passed the crime bill that makes it almost impossible for prisoners to file suit to stop beatings and cruelty—or two others that give police almost unlimited powers to search and detain whomever they'd like to.

No wonder self-aware S/M people weigh so heavily on Gingrich's mind. If there were more of us, there would be almost no voting base for the Republican Party. In a country where people understood how to express their sadism without hurting innocent people, Rush Limbaugh would be a sandwich maker, and most of his fans would be buoyant Dagwood Bumsteads. Phil Gramm would be a college professor no one listened to, and Pat Buchanan, a third-rate wrestling pro. Instead of "red-meat conservatives," there'd be liberals ready for a spree of compassion after an enlivening evening of unshackling the butcher within. Talk radio would be full of impassioned calls for more social spending and better antiracist training for police officers, and teenage boys would prove their self-worth by baking, not by beating up gay men.

Hardly the sort of country where the right wing thrives—which may explain why Gingrich's uncanny vigilance against open S/M people is shared by many other homophobes. The latest group to launch an attack against the sadists in our midst is the Report, a video company linked to an antigay newsletter called "The Lambda Report." The group has released a video called *Stonewall: 25 Years of Deception*, which makes the remarkable "discovery" that gay S/M people are the missing link between the Nazis and the gay movement.

The narrator says the love all homosexuals feel for

Adolf Hitler and his program is "the reason why you see in the current homosexual movement" people wearing "all this [S/M regalia], the high boots, the whips." Not only does *25 Years of Deception* use S/M people as the linchpin of its most disturbing slander against gays, but it also contains more images of S/M people than of any other kind of lesbian or gay man. A well-known prior effort by the same producers, *The Gay Agenda*, was also preoccupied with S/M people. Its most constant image was one calculated to frighten viewers with little understanding of the context and limits of S/M—lovers leading each other on leashes in gay pride events. Judging from the sheer numbers pictured, you'd think we were the majority of the gay community—or at the least the dominant voice in its institutions and political life—not a group some activists regularly suggest should be banned from gay pride parades, a group strangely absent from fund-raising appeals on behalf of gay rights groups, a group that has never spoken in the first person on *Nightline*, not even during the long night of the NEA debates.

From any angle the portrayal of S/M people in these videos is excessive. Why is the Right so mesmerized by S/M? To date, most commentators have glossed this in pragmatic terms only—as an effective means of linking gays and lesbians with an even more feared and hated sexual minority. I have no doubt that this is one motivation, but recent events in Washington suggest an additional interpretation. Uncontrolled, unself-conscious sadism is becoming a much stronger force in American politics. Conservative legislators in New York and California have seriously proposed flogging as a penalty for graffiti writing. And the new craze for punishment is hardly restricted to Republicans. Communitarian philosopher Amitai Etzioni, the darling of "reconstructed" Democrats, calls for a return to "public humiliation" of criminals. Making certain kinds of convicts wear signs that identify them in public, says Etzioni, is "a surprisingly effective and low-cost way of...expressing the moral order of a community." It was certainly an effective method in Hester Prynne's day.

Where sadism is recognized, it will not operate covertly. Where the desire to hurt is acknowledged, it can be controlled. In February the House Republican leadership unveiled something they referred to as a "tough love" welfare reform plan, which would batter just about every constituency in America that doesn't tend to vote. If Newt and his colleagues really want their love tough, let them fund and enroll in the S/M course Newt inadvertently promoted in his sound bite on gay-positive curricula. At least then it would be consensual and open to the influence of compassion.

Uncontrolled, unself-conscious sadism is becoming a much stronger force in American politics.



Christine Rose

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Don't worry, this process doesn't cost you anything. If you have any questions, give us a call.

Remember, it never hurts to ask.

1-800-572-4346



we promise.

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